



M Taylor's

The Voice of One crying in a Wilderness:

IN SEVERAL
S E R M O N S,

R E P R E S E N T I N G

The Business of a CHRISTIAN,
both antecedaneous to, concomitant of, and
consequent upon, a sore and heavy Visitation.

First preached to his own Family, lying under
such heavy Visitation; and now made public,
as a Thank-offering to the LORD his Healer.

BY SAMUEL SHAW, *R*
A servant of GOD in the Gospel of his SON.

All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth, unto such
as keep his covenant, and his testimonies. PSAL. XXV. 10.

*Mala pœnalìa non sunt vere mala: quia fluunt a summo Bono,
nimirum DEO; ducunt ad summum Bonum, nimirum fruitionem
DEI; et erant in summo Bono, nimirum CHRISTO. Biel.*

The evils of punishment are not truly evils: for they flow
from the chiefest Good, even GOD; they lead to the
chiefest Good, the enjoyment of GOD; and are found
in the chiefest Good, even CHRIST JESUS.

E D I N B U R G H:

Printed for W. GRAY, front of the New Exchange.

MDCCLXVII.

On Sunday

The first of the series is a W. A. 1881

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T O T H E
R E A D E R.

THE few pieces of this worthy author, Mr SAMUEL SHAW, have but very lately come to be known in this part of the world. We have read them with great satisfaction; and find them written in so pious a strain, full of such elevated and devout sentiments, and so fitted to raise the soul above the world, to GOD, and CHRIST, and heavenly things, that we do most earnestly recommend them to the serious perusal of the Christian reader; heartily praying, that, by the divine blessing, they may be found as profitable and improving to him, as they are well calculated to be.

Edin. April 25.

I 7 5 1.

WILL. WISHART.

ALEX. WEBSTER.

REDAE

T O T H E
R E A D E R.

CHRISTIAN READERS,

IT is now more than seven months since it pleased the holy and wise GOD to visit my house with the plague, when some dear and Christian friends from London were with me, whereby he gently touched and gave warning to myself and whole family, consisting then of eight souls, but called away hence only three members of it, *viz.* two tender babes, and one servant, besides my beloved sister, and a child of my precious friend, that man of GOD, Mr G. C. since also translated, who were of those citizens that visited me. You will easily believe that I can have no pleasure to rake into the ashes of the dead, nor to revive the taste of that wormwood and gall, which was then given me to drink; and yet I see no reason but that I ought to take pleasure in the pure and holy will of GOD, which always proceeds by the eternal rules of almighty Love and Goodness, though the same be executed upon my dearest creature comforts, and grate never so much upon my sweetest earthly interest; yea, and I see all reason in the world why I should give to GOD the glory of his attributes and works before all the world, and endeavour that

some instruction may accompany that astonishment, which from me and my house hath gone out and spread itself far and near. I will not undertake to make any physical observations upon this unaccountable disease, nor to vindicate myself either from that great guilt that is charged upon me, as if I were a sinner above all that dwell in this country, or from those many false and senseless aspersions that have been cast upon my behaviour during this visitation, much like that we read of, Matth. xxviii. 13. but do freely commit myself “to him that judgeth righteously,” and pray with the psalmist, Psal. lxi. 6. “Let not them that wait on thee, O LORD GOD of hosts, be ashamed for my sake: let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O GOD of Israel.” Neither do I purposely undertake in this preface to reconcile the providences of the most wise GOD to his promises, or to salve the seeming difference between the words of his mouth and the language of his hands, between which I have only suspected some kind of jar, but have experienced an excellent harmony:—“In very faithfulness hast thou afflicted me.” Whence arise all these uncharitable censures with which the afflicted soul is apt to charge both himself and his GOD too? spring they not certainly from these two grand causes, viz. a misapprehension of the nature of GOD, and of the nature of good and evil? Let the studious and pious reader search and judge. If ever therefore you would be established in your minds in a day of affliction; 1. “Labour to be rightly informed concerning the nature of GOD.” Away with those low and gross apprehensions of GOD,

whereby your carnal fancies do ascribe unto GOD such a kind of indulgence towards his children as you bear towards yours, which indeed noway agrees to his nature. His good will towards his children is a solid, wise, and holy disposition, infinitely unlike to our human affections. *Soli Deo competit, amare et sapere.* 2. "Labour to be rightly informed concerning the nature of good and evil." Judge not the goodness or evilness of things by their agreeableness or disagreeableness to your fleshly palate, or carnal interest, but by the relation that they have to the supreme Good. The greatest prosperity in the world is no further good than as it tends to make us partakers of GOD; and the greatest affliction may thus be really good also. But that by the by. My design is to justify and glorify infinite Wisdom, Righteousness, Goodness and Holiness before all men. Oh blessed GOD! who makes a seeming dungeon to be indeed a wine-cellar; who brings his poor people into a wilderness, on set purpose there to speak comfortably to them! Be of good cheer, O my soul; he hath taken away nothing but what he gave; and in lieu of it hath given thee that which shall never be taken away, the first fruits of life, instead of those whom the first-born of death hath devoured. But why do I say devoured? doth not that truly live at this day, which was truly lovely in those darlings? Didst thou, O my fond heart, love beauty, sweetness, ingenuity incarnate? and canst thou not love it still in the fountain, and enjoy it in a more immediate and compendious way? Thy body indeed cannot taste sweetness in the abstract, nor see beauty except it be subjected in matter; but

canst not thou, O my soul, taste the uncreated goodness and sweetness except it be embodied, and have some material thing to commend it to thy palate? Be ashamed that thou, being a spirit as to thy constitution, art no more spiritual in thy affections and operations. Dost thou with sadness reflect upon those sweet smiles, and that broken rhetoric with which those babes were wont to entertain thee?

1. Consider duly what of real contentment thou hast lost in losing those. For what were those things to thy real happiness? Thou hast lost nothing, but what it was no solid pleasure nor true felicity to enjoy; nothing but what the most sensual and brutish souls do enjoy as much as thou. 2. Be ashamed rather that thou didst enjoy them in such a gross and unspiritual manner. Art thou troubled because any earthly interest is violated? rather be ashamed that thou hadst and cherishedest any such interest.

BUT pardon me, courteous readers, this digressive soliloquy; and now suffer me patiently, whilst I speak something by way of Admiration, something by way of Observation, and something by way of Exhortation.

1st, LET me call upon men and angels to help me in celebrating the infinite and almighty grace and goodness of the eternal and blessed God.

WHO enabled me to abide the day of his coming, to stand when he appeared, and made me willing to suffer him to sit as a refiner of silver in my house.

WHO carried me above all murmurings against, I had almost said all remembrance of, those instruments that conveyed the infection to me.

WHO reconciled my heart to this disease, so that it seemed no more grievous, noisome, or scandalous than any other.

WHO subdued me to, I had almost said, brought me in love with this passage of the Divine Will. I can remember, (alas ! that I can say little more, but that I do remember), how my soul was overpowered, yea, and almost ravished with the goodness, holiness, and perfection of the will of GOD ; and verily judged it my happiness and perfection, as well as my duty, to comply chearfully with it, and be moulded into it.

WHO gave me a most powerful and quick sense of the plague of a carnal heart, self-will, and inordinate creature-loves, convincing me that those were infinitely worse than the plague in the flesh ; so that I did more pity than I could be pitied by my ordinary visitors.

WHO wonderfully preserved me from the assaults of the devil, never let him loose so much as to try his strength upon my integrity, to drive me to a despondency, or to any uncharitable conclusions concerning my state.

WHO enabled me to converse with his Love and Mercy in the midst of his chastnings, to see his shining and smiling face through this dark cloud ; yea, kept up clear and steady persuasions in my soul that I was beloved of him, though afflicted by him.

WHO knew my soul in adversity, visited me when I was sick and in prison, refreshed, strengthened, comforted my inner man, in a marvellous manner and measure, and made me appear to myself never less shut up than when shut up. Oh, would to GOD

I might be never worse than when I was shut up of the plague ! The not removing of that affliction-frame I shall account a greater blessing, and a more proper mercy, than the removing of that afflicted state.

WHO cleared up my interest in his SON, strengthened my evidences of his love, satisfied and assured my soul of its happy state, more than at any time, more than at all times formerly. I had clearer and surer evidences of divine grace in that patient, self-denying, self-submitting frame of spirit, than in all the duties that I ever performed : the valley of tears brought me more sight of my GOD, more insight into myself, than ever the valley of visions, all duties and ordinances had done. When the Sun of Righteousness arose upon my soul, and chased away all the mists and fogs of self-will and creature-loves, then also did all black and dismal fears, all gloomy doubtings, most sensibly flee before him.

WHO supplied my family from compassionate friends, with all things needful for food and physic, &c. The LORD return it seven-fold into their bosoms.

WHO maintained my health in the midst of sickness, in the midst of so great a death. I do not remember that either sorrow of mind, or sickness of body ever prevailed so much upon me, during three months seclusion, as to hinder me of my ordinary study, repast, devotions, or my necessary attendance upon my several infected rooms, and administering to the necessities of my sick. These ensuing discourses were then composed ; which doth, at least, argue, that, through grace, this mind was not altogether discomposed, nor body neither.

WHO preserved me, and gave me not up to death. For I judge that I was personally visited with the plague, though not with the sickness.

WHO hath given me a sincere and settled resolution, and vehement desire to live entirely on and to himself; which I account to be the only life of a soul, and only worthy to be called a living. Grant me this prayer, O most blessed and gracious GOD, for the sake of my only and dear REDEEMER:

THOU, O LORD GOD, who art witness to all my thoughts, and words, and works, knowest that in truth and soberness I publish these things to the world, not to advance the reputation of my own silly name, or to be admired of my fellow-creatures, but for the glory of thy holy name, to beget a good liking of so gracious a Creator in all thy poor creatures, who are prejudiced against thee and thy holy service, and to strengthen the hearts of thy servants to a most firm and lasting adherence to thee even in the greatest extremities; that thou mayst be admired in thy saints, and glorified for giving such power, and grace, and comfort unto men. And, "Oh that
"men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and
"for his wonderful works in and to the children
"of men!"

2dly, SUFFER me to make a short observation of some few memorable passages, out of many; possibly they may be for the future, though they should not be for your present advantage. The LORD direct you to make a right application of them, according to the emergencies of life!

I. I DO thankfully record the gracious design of the holy and wise GOD, in that he had secretly prepared my heart, though at the time I knew not particularly for what. I remember, that for some few weeks before, I had found a more than ordinary largeness and readiness of soul; particularly, that I had been studying the excellent mystery, and sucking out the strengthening marrow of that famous text, 1 John iv. 8. "GOD IS LOVE;" from whence I had importunately press'd upon myself the reasonableness of complying sweetly, chearfully, universally with the will of GOD, little dreaming then of the plague, which was almost an hundred miles off me. Oh blessed and merciful GOD, who of old didst make Abraham, and yet makest his and thy children to follow thee, though they know not well whither!

IN the next place, I count it most worthy of my observation, (not unworthy of your consideration), that it pleased GOD to seize upon my family in the beginning of harvest; a harvest which I had too earnestly expected, too carefully provided for, and promised myself too liberally from; which folly and vanity of mind, this visitation, thus timed, did as clearly convince me of (methought) as if I had seen an hand-writing upon the wall. I am ashamed, yet I will not stick to confess before all the world, (GOD grant it may be for the seasonable and effectual warning of any), that my vainer mind was over-pleasantly, not to say eagerly, drawn out towards secular and worldly, however necessary, employments and concernments: and thus I was rebuked.

UPON examination I find, that verily I have been guilty concerning my children. I do not remember

that ever any man reproved me for immoderate loving of them, or could for any indulgence that could be by human eyes discerned; but oh ! I see and feel it as a sword at my heart, that I loved them not so purely, spiritually, and properly in GOD as I ought to have done. Philosophy will easily prove it to be a more tolerable vanity to dote upon a child than upon a kingdom; but Christian divinity doth abundantly demonstrate all creature fondness unreasonable and intollerable.

THE next thing that I will record shall be, the difficult task that I found to maintain a right humble and a right chearful frame at the same time. Oh how oft and how long did I labour under this difficulty ! That sense of sin which was called in to promote tenderness of heart, being over much indulged, was ready at length to destroy that largeness and chearfulness of soul which was so much my duty and interest to maintain : and, on the other hand, the sense of divine Wisdom, Grace, and Love in CHRIST JESUS being called in to keep up the soul from sinking, was ready to bear it up so high as that it almost forgot that it was in the waters. Beware, Christians, and watch diligently, that godly sorrow do not settle into an ungodly despondency and inconsolable heaviness, the soul not being able to bear up under its own burden ; and that a holy chearfulness and serenity do not evaporate into an unholy frothiness and forgetfulness of your infirmities, the soul not being able to manage its own metal and motions.

I KNOW you would willingly understand something of the frame of my heart at that day, respective to my departure out of this world : you will best

read my heart in the ensuing discourse upon 2 Cor. v. 6. which I think was fetched from thence. I shall therefore say no more as to this matter; only acquaint you with one eminent experience relating hereunto. My mind, or fancy, or appetite, (I know not well what to call it), was sometimes inditing in me some desires to live yet longer. I entered the lists with this temptation, and when I had fairly and calmly debated the ground and reason of such inclination, after many shifts and pretences, it came to this, I would fain persuade myself I was not yet holy enough: this I did immediately consent to, knowing it to be a certain truth; but that therefore I should desire to prolong my days upon earth, this was a falacious inference. Methought I pleased myself a while, whilst I could say, I desired only to live to be better: but after a time I apprehended a fallacy in this pretence; for the way to be perfected in holiness, is not living, but indeed dying. Christians, if indeed your souls be sincerely and powerfully affected towards perfect holiness, then sing not so much with David, "Spare me that I may recover," &c. as with good old Simeon, who having seen GOD in the flesh, desired to go out of the flesh, that he might see him more fully and beatifically;—"Now lettest thou thy servant depart," &c. I cannot enlarge upon this observation; I suppose I have hinted enough to shew those pretences of many men, *viz.* that they would fain live to be more fit to die, to be, for the most part, but a kind of mockery and self-deceit.

LASTLY, (that I be not over tedious), I do solemnly and sincerely profess before GOD, and angels,

and men, that I was never so much as inclined to think hardly of GOD, or his good and holy ways, because of this dispensation ; but did then constantly and freely proclaim to all that came to visit me, that sin, particularly self-will and sensual loves, are the worst of plagues; and holiness the only happiness of man; yea, afflicted holiness infinitely to be preferred before prosperous wickedness.

3dly, SUFFER me, as a conclusion of this preface, and as a result from all that I have seen and suffered, to commend unto you a few excellent and necessary duties. I have much ado to forbear being large here ; but I have already transgressed, therefore I will wave those common themes of remembering your Creator betimes, of hearkening to the voice of his word, before his rod speak, of living in continual preparation for death, of repenting and renewing repentance, &c. and only commend two or three things, which seem to me of most excellent and necessary importance ;

———*petimusque damusque vicissim.*

1. " Love and enjoy all things in GOD." Admire Divine Goodness in every created excellency, and taste a divine sweetness in every created comfort. O how is the noble soul of man debased, pinched, confined, by low and sensual loves ; whilst many men love the creature in opposition to the Creator, most men in competition with him, and almost all men in a way of separation from him ! Oh base and degenerate affections ! Let GOD be all things in your eye, so that you shall see, nor know, nor love,

nor taste nothing but him in the world. Deliver yourselves (oh immortal souls, to whom I write) from all those low, and straitening, and starving creature loves, and long and labour to be filled with pure, and holy, and spiritual delights, such as the angels of GOD have, such as the SON of GOD had, when he made it his meat and drink to do the will of his FATHER. But this you will find more largely prosecuted and pressed in the last of these following discourses : therefore,

2. "LIVE purely at the pleasure of GOD, and maintain an universal and hearty compliance with his holy and perfect will." Believe it, you will never enjoy a firm and steady peace, till you have committed all your wills and ways to him, and wrapt up all your interests and ends in him, till your hearts be conformed to the honour of GOD, and your wills moulded into his will. It is a difference of wills and ends, and a distinction of interests, that beget all these ragings and stormings in the hearts of men against GOD : mine and thine do not only divide the world amongst men, but divide men against GOD, earth against heaven. Take this for a certain and undoubted aphorism, that "the grand interest of a soul is to comply with, and be one with GOD." Communion of hearts, and wills, and interests, and ends, is that glorious fellowship which a creature hath with its Creator ; it is indeed the interest and honour, the duty and dignity, yea, the heaven and happiness of the reasonable creature. But something to this purpose you will find in the first discourse.

3. I BESEECH you, Christians, be not content to say, you have chosen GOD for your chiefest good, but "pursue after him as such, without grudging, "and without ceasing, longing to be as much one "with him in a participation of divine perfections "as our created natures are capable of." Maintains a holy and secret striving of soul towards this blessed object continually, as a thing moves towards its centre, as a soul ought to endeavour to accomplish its own perfections: stand not gazing upon a heaven to come, but labour to draw down all that peace, joy, love, purity, which heaven is, into your own souls, by growing up into the life of GOD daily. Reckon that you are never in a right temper, except you be in David's temper, when he waited for GOD "more than they that watch for the morning," when his soul broke for the longing that it had unto him at all times. I say not that you should prepare for death; that seems too low, both word and thing: look and live beyond death and the grave, be lifting up your heads to discover the dawns of the day of your redemption, be laying hold upon immortality and eternal life. Something to this purpose you will find in the second discourse, whither I refer you.

AND now accept, I pray you, these poor labours, which, for the glory of my GOD, I make public, that since, with Hezekiah, I may not go up to the house of the LORD, to declare the goodness of the LORD, yet I may leave some monument of it in writing, as he did, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness. I will add no more, but entreat all serious and devout readers to magnify

the holy name of GOD on my behalf, adding thereunto their earnest prayers to GOD for me, viz. that the same fire that burnt up the standing corn of my creature-comforts, may also happily consume the stubble of my creature-delights and loves; that my GOD would give me "a name better than of sons" and of daughters," the blessed fruits of his SPIRIT instead of the beloved fruits of the womb; that I may for ever live under the most powerful influences of this dispensation; and that the glory of the LORD may never depart out of the temple of my soul, as it departed out of the temple made with hands.

Now to the GOD of all grace and peace be all praise and glory! To him I commit you all, and rest

Your friend and servant

Feb. 27. 1665.

IN CHRIST JESUS,

SAMUEL SHAW.

*Quod sani quæſivimus, hoc invenimus ægri:
Quæ nequirit vallis viſus, tulit hæc lachrymarum.*

C O N T E N T S.

FIRST DISCOURSE.

A WELCOME TO THE PLAGUE.

On AMOS iv. 12.

—PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD, O ISRAEL.

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A

W E L C O M E

T O T H E

P L A G U E.

A M O S iv. 12.

—PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD, O ISRAEL.

IN this sermon of the prophet, the LORD reckons up the many fearful plagues wherewith, from time to time, he had assayed to reclaim this perverse people, the ten tribes of Israel, beginning at the 6th verse; but still concludes the relation with a doleful epiphonema, "Yet have ye not returned unto me." It is not my business to inquire into the several plagues, either the clear meaning of them, or the particular time when they took place or ended, nor into the impenitence and stubbornness of the people; though many useful things might be observed from hence. But in the conclusion, because none of these judgments had prevailed upon them, God resolves to trouble himself with them no longer, but to destroy

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them utterly. All that he had done to them in the land had not prevailed; therefore now he will cast them, and carry them out of the land, by the overflowing scourge of an Assyrian captivity. This threatening he denounces in the second and third verses, "I will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fish-hooks," &c. And after he had reckoned up the many calamities whereby he had sought to bring them to repentance, but they repented not, and so had demonstrated the equitableness of this final judgment, he re-assumes the same threatening, and persists in his former resolution, ver. 12. "Therefore thus will I do unto thee;" and then adds, "Because I will do this unto thee, therefore prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

WHICH words may either be understood ironically, by way of derision of all their vain confidences and refuges; and then the doctrine is, "That there is no standing before, nor striving against, nor flying before God, when he comes to execute vengeance:" which is an excellent truth, and of great use. Or else the words may be understood seriously, by way of exhortation. The doubt seems to arise from the ambiguous meaning of the word *meet*: the word לקח signifies both to meet in a hostile manner, to assault, invade, or grapple with, as a man meets his enemy; so it is used

concerning David addressing himself to fight with Goliath, 1 Sam. xvii. 48. "He ran to meet the Philistine;" and also to meet in a friendly amicable manner, by way of communication, collocation, salutation, or converse; so it is used concerning Isaac going to meet Rebekah, Gen. xxiv. 65. and concerning God's meeting of Balaam, to speak with him, and impart his mind to him, Numb. xxiii. 4. If we take the word in the first sense, then it is spoken by way of irony or derision, and so the meaning of the words is contained in the proposition that I have laid down. If we take the words in the latter sense, then it is spoken seriously by way of exhortation, and so the meaning of them may be wrapt up into this

DOCT. "That it is the duty of God's people
 "to study a right behaviour towards him, and
 "to converse with him aright in the way of
 "his judgments, in the time of their afflictions." And in this sense I shall take them, and prosecute them. Besides that general, unalterable godly frame and behaviour, which God's people owe to him as a standing duty, and indispensable homage, there are some more especial behaviours and tempers which they owe to him in special cases, and are duties *pro hic et nunc*, as the season requireth; particularly, there are some special behaviours required at our hands in the time of our affliction:

and these both, 1. Towards ourselves, as self-examination, self-judging, renewing of repentance, &c. 2. Towards men, meekness, compassion, instructing, warning, comforting, &c. 3. Towards God, as we shall see anon. An afflicted condition doth call for some more especial tempers and behaviours towards ourselves and others: but these I am not to speak unto from this text. It is the soul's meeting God, behaviour towards him, conversing with him, that my text leads me to treat of, and I shall not vary from it. In handling of which position I shall take this method.

I. PREMISE some things needful to be known concerning the soul's conversing with God: for I shall retain the word **CONVERSING** throughout my discourse, as being a single, yet a large and significant word.

II. **SHEW** what it is for a soul to converse with God; and how it comes to converse with him.

III. **PROVE** the doctrine, that it is our duty to converse with God in the way of his judgments.

IV. **SHEW** particularly, how we are to converse with God in the time of afflictions.

V. **APPLY** it.

I. I SHALL premise some things needful to be known, that tend to clear up my way to the following discourse.

I. I PREMISE, "That it is the great duty of man to converse with God." I have read that it was a common precept that the Jewish doctors were wont to give to the people, that they should single out some one commandment, and exercise themselves very diligently in the observation of it, that therein they might make God their friend, and make him a kind of amends for the breach of many others. I doubt it is a rule that too many professors live by, who not having the genuine and generous spirit of true religion, do parcel out their obedience into some little shreds of homage and devotion, and instead of consecrating their whole lives to God, do content themselves with some circumstantial and light obedience, and think themselves people of great attainments, if they do but severely tie up themselves to hearing twice a-week, and prayer twice a-day, and a few other acts of more solemn worship. Certainly this is a penurious and needy spirit, much unlike the generous, ample, and free-born spirit of true religion. The duty, the whole duty, the constant duty of man is to converse with God, commended in Enoch by the name of "walking with God," Gen. v. 22. where you may observe of him, that he did not only set out fairly with God, take a turn or two with him, but he walked with him three hundred years together. The same God calls

for from Abraham, under the same name, Gen. xvii. 1. "Walk before me, and be thou perfect." But it is not only the command of God that makes this a duty; if there had been no express commandment concerning it, yet were it the duty of every man, necessarily flowing from his relation as a reasonable creature. As man is a creature, so he must needs live upon God; and as a reasonable creature, so he ought to live with him and unto him. Therefore hath God given unto man a noble rational soul, not only that he might talk and work, manage the creatures, and converse with the world, but that he might converse with the God of the world, that infinite, blessed, and glorious Being. This is the very end of man's creation, as man, as a reasonable creature: this was the end of his being created in the image of God, and when he was fallen from this image, this was the end of his redemption by CHRIST JESUS, that heaven and earth might be reconciled, and those that were far off might be brought nigh. Sin is a sinking of the soul down to self and the creature, and redemption from sin is nothing else but a recovery of the soul into a state of favour and fellowship with God; so that whatever is expressed by faith and repentance, is contained in this one word, converse with God. It is the great, the necessary, and, as I may say, the natural duty of the reasonable soul.

2. "It is the highest privilege of man." The prerogative of man above the beast is his reason, and the glory of reason is, that it is capable of knowing, loving, enjoying, and conversing with the supreme and infinite Good. The privilege of reason is not, as too many think, that it is capable of understanding arts and sciences; that it is capable of climbing up into the nature and course of the heavens, and diving into the secret depths of the earth and sea, and the creatures therein contained; but in conversing with the infinite and glorious God. How miserably do vulgar souls abuse this noble faculty, who exercise it only in discoursing, numbering, and ordering the poor concerns of the world and the body! Yea, certainly those wise men, those scribes, those disputers of this world, as the apostle calls them, who cry up this faculty, and glory so much in it, and yet do not exercise it about that high and eternal Being, do not converse with God in pure affections, and God-like dispositions and conversations, but expend those vast treasures of reason upon secrets in nature, secrets in art, secrets in state, or any other created being, do enthrall their own souls, which they say are so free-born, and captivate and confine that noble principle, which they themselves do so much magnify; for sin is certainly the great and only shame and reproach of an immortal

soul. And indeed these men, though they put their souls to somewhat a more noble drudgery, yet are really no more happy than the vulgar sort, who spend the strength of their souls about eating and drinking, plowing and sowing, or keeping of cattle. What difference, I pray you, in point of true happiness, is there between boys playing with pins and points, and old men's hugging of bags and lands? The noblest sciences, the greatest commands, the most enriching traffics, are as very toys in comparison of true happiness as the poor dunghill-possessions of vulgar men; and the wise, the rich, the learned, the honourable of the world, that take up with an employment in this world, and with a happiness in themselves, or in any creature, do as much disgrace their own souls, and as truly live below their own faculties, as he doth that knows no higher good than food and raiment, no higher employment than to toil all his days in a ditch. For indeed, as to all things but conversing with God, man seems to be but equal, perhaps inferior to the beasts that perish. Doth man eat, drink, sleep, work? so do they. Doth man find any sensual pleasure which the beasts do not sensible as well as he? nay, the gormandizing Emperor envied the crane's long neck, and others have envied the more able and permanent lusts of the brute beasts, because themselves have been inferior to them

therein, and have enjoyed less sensual pleasure than they. If any glory in their knowledge of natural and political things, I could instance in the strong memory, great sagacity, quick fancy, wonderful perceptions of many beasts, and their strange knowledge of many secrets, which they never learnt by books, nor gathered gradually by observations; and as for man's communications of his notions by words and phrases, I doubt not to affirm that there is something like to be found in beasts and birds; yea, that very beauty and flower of sound, even music, which some men magnify so much, is more fairly and sweetly uttered by the silly bird that sits solitarily upon a bough, than by the quillsters of the Pope's cathedral. What solid prerogative worth naming remains to man above his fellow-creatures, but his conversing with God, which we call *religion*, and is indeed reason rectified, sanctified, exalted, and boiled up into its pure and primitive perfection! inso-much that I have sometimes thought that I never heard a more reproachful word spoken concerning degenerate man, neither do I think that any thing can be spoken of him more shameful and dishonourable than what the apostle saith of the heathen, Eph. ii. 12.—“without God “in the world.” By conversing with God in the world is man truly raised above the beasts, and the godly man above all other men; nay,

hereby is the godly soul advanced to the dignity and glory of the holy angels, or at least to a parity of happiness; for it is this that is their perfection and glory, as we find it described in Matth. xviii. 10. — “they always behold the face of God.” And therefore our blessed SAVIOUR doth affirm, that the saints in the resurrection, who shall be raised above all creature communion, to live upon God singly and entirely, shall be *ἰσούμενοι*, equal to the angels of God, Luke xx. 36. In a word, this is the most real heaven, setting aside all circumstances of place, &c. the perfect and proper happiness of a soul, to see God, Matth. v. 8. to be like unto him, 1 John iii. 2. to converse with the FATHER by the SON, as our SAVIOUR hath told us, who best knew it, John xvii. 3. “This is life eternal, to know thee the only true GOD, and JESUS CHRIST whom thou hast sent.” By this it is that God dwells in the soul, and the soul in God, as we shall see hereafter, and the kingdom of heaven doth really enter into every believer.

3. “The natural man is utterly unwilling and unable to converse with God.” An earthly mountain may as soon rise up to heaven by its own power and good-will as an earthly mind; and such minds are all natural and unregenerate. Sin, as I hinted before, is a falling from God, a sinking of the soul into self, whether

sensual self or spiritual self, and a shrivelling
 of it up into the creature; and the sinful soul
 is always, like a shadow, moving upon the sur-
 face of the earth, and higher it cannot get,
 Rom. viii. 5. Would you know what is the prin-
 cipal object of a natural man's admiration, in-
 clination, and ambition? the Psalmist will tell
 you, it is some created good, Psal. iv. 6. 7. Will
 you know what is the disposition of the natu-
 ral man towards the supreme and uncreated
 Good? the apostle will tell you, it is ignorance
 and enmity, 1 Cor. ii. 14. Rom. viii. 7. "The
 carnal mind is enmity against God." This
 high duty of conversing with God in a right
 manner is besides the temper of the wicked
 man: never any such man did perform it. It
 is a contradiction: a wicked man conversing
 with God is, as if one should say, an ungodly
 man that is godly. But that is not all: this
 duty is not only out of the hands of a wicked
 man, but out of his reach too,—neither can he
 know him, saith the apostle to the Corinthians;
 and again to the Romans,—“Neither can he
 be subject to him. Can two walk together
 except they be agreed?” saith the prophet:
 Can man walk with God, converse with God,
 except he be reconciled to him? and what
 agreement but by a Mediator? what Mediator
 between God and man but CHRIST JESUS, who
 is a Mediator, as the Logicians call a *medium*

participationis, who is God-man? In a word, some converse with one thing in the world, and some with another, as I noted before; but all converse principally and mainly with the creature, that are not regenerated by grace, reconciled by CHRIST.

4. "It is the duty of man, in all ages of life, at all times, and in all places and conditions, to converse with God." It is a necessary, natural, certain, constant duty, springing up out of the very nature and natural will of God, and out of the very nature and relation, and capacity of the reasonable soul, binding *semper ad semper*, as the schoolmen speak, and admitting of no dispensation or diminution. There is no time wherein it is not a duty, or wherein it is less a duty than at another time; however, we are apt to give to ourselves many relaxations from it. The first fruits, nay, the very early buds of the tender soul, and of the springing faculties, these are due to God, and ought to be dedicated to him, Eccl. xii. 1. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." Manhood is not allowed so to attend unto cares and exploits, nor old age to pains and griefs, as to neglect converse with God; but whether young men build or plant, fight or study, work or marry, or manage the affairs of the house or of the field, all should be undertaken and car-

ried on in a way of converse and fellowship with God; or whether old men sit and muse and meditate, or ly under the pain and grievances of decrepit age, still it ought to be in the LORD. Neither doth this duty admit of interruption, no more than of cessation: there is no dispensation given us from this duty, as in no age, so in no hour of our life. As we cannot live a moment out of God, so neither ought we to live a moment without God in the world: we ought continually to endeavour to walk in subservience to, and converse with God; yea, and, as far as may be, in a feeling converse with him too. Holy David witnesses of himself, that the fear of God was continually before his eyes, and that he did continually converse with God, for so those words may be understood, Psal. lxxiii. 23. "I am continually "with thee." The like is recorded of many other saints both in the Old and New Testaments, concerning whom one may well say, as the Queen of Sheba concerning the servants of Solomon, and with much better reason, 1 Kings x. 8. "Happy are these thy servants (O LORD) "which stand continually before thee." Neither is it the duty of some few men, who have the greatest knowledge, or the most leisure; for it springs out of the relation of a creature, and out of the very nature of the rational soul; so that no soul of man is exempted from it

however many ignorant and profane persons live rather in a professed independence upon God. Neither is it a duty only upon supposition of leisure and freedom from worldly business, as some other things are, but is equally incumbent upon prince and peasant, upon him that sits in his closet, and upon him that plows in the field; yea, they that go down unto the sea in ships ought to go up to heaven in their hearts, and not only to converse with the clouds, which they often do, but above them too. A hand full of earth, and a heart full of heaven, may well stand together; for as this duty jussles out no honest business, so neither should itself be jussled out by any. And as this high and excellent duty agrees to all ages, and times, and persons, so it agrees to all conditions too. Poor men think that rich men may well do it, and rich men think that poor men had need to do it; Prosperity thinks it hath better things to mind than a God, and Adversity knows it hath worse things, but it must mind them; Plenty is too full to entertain him, and Poverty hath enough to do to bear up under its own burden; Learning knows how, but will not; Ignorance says it would, but knows not how. But, notwithstanding all this shuffling, the obligation to this duty ceases not: none so high as to be above it, none so mean as to be below it; for rich and poor, high and low, learned and un-

learned, prince and peasant, though they are divided amongst themselves by punctilios and lesser differences, yet they are united in one universal Being, meet in one and the same centre, agree in the common capacity of reasonable creatures. As religion hath an interest and a concernment in the whole of the conversation, according to that of the apostle, Philip. iii. 20. "Our conversation is in heaven;" so also hath it a room in the conversation of every man in every capacity: no relation, condition, action, change, is exempted from the powerful influence thereof: so the apostle describes himself, by his "living in all good conscience before God" all along, Acts xxiii. 1. and by his exercising himself in this thing, "to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men," Acts xiv. 16.

Now, the 5th step in order would be, that "It is more especially the duty of God's people "to study to converse with him aright in the "way of his judgments;" which is the doctrine itself, which I must not come to confirm, till I have shewed, according to my promise,

II. IN the 2d place, "what it is for the soul "to converse with God, and how it comes to "converse with him."

Nor to name those too low and improper notions that men ordinarily have of this high

and spiritual matter, conversing with God, to speak properly of it, is "a complex act of the soul, whereby it entertains God into itself, "and renders itself back again to him;" receives impressions from him, and gives up itself again to him; is first filled with him, and then empties itself into him. You may conceive of it after the similitude of a plant, that is influenced by the benign beams of the sun, and in those beams spreads itself, and in the virtue and power of them grows up towards heaven: or after the similitude of a river, that is continually filled with the ocean, and is continually emptying itself into the same; πάντες πληρῶται & πάντες ἐκπύ. This seems to be our SAVIOUR'S elegant allusion, John iv. 14. where he compares a divine and godly principle in the soul to "a well of water," springing out from God; and continually boiling and bubbling up towards him,—"springing up into everlasting life." Or you may conceive of it after the similitude of a glass, which receives the image of him that looks into it, and reflects the self-same image that it receives: for indeed the brightness and beauty of holiness, wherewith a godly soul doth shine as a light in the world, is nothing but a reflection of that light and brightness wherewith the FATHER of lights shines into it. And so the best of men have nothing of their own to glory in: for they be-

hold God, but it is in his own light; they love him with a love which he hath shed abroad in their hearts; they are therefore like him, because he hath stamped his own image upon them; and so they must needs acknowledge, concerning all their acts of love, communion, and delight, as David did in another case, "Of thine own we offer unto thee." This is indeed the true and noble converse and communion with God, wherein the life of a godly man is infinitely advanced above the life of all other men, and indeed doth nearly resemble the life of angels. Their life is described in the holy scriptures by a seeing of God, a beholding of him face to face; which we must not understand of a naked idle speculation, but of a real assimilation, arising from the divine impressions made upon them; a beholding of him so as to be changed into his image: and such is a godly man's life, spiritual life, his life of converse with God, consisting in a participation of God and of his grace, and a holy reciprocation or reflection of affections to him; which are indeed two distinct acts, tho' originally springing from the same fountain: for the love wherewith the soul loves God is itself an efflux from him; for by loving us he inspires a love into us, and by influences from God we become God-like. But this converse with God is not only by the impressions of goodness from God,

and the reflections of love and delight towards him, but is also seen in the various acts of the soul, according to the various impressions which God makes upon the soul, and suitable to the various occasions of life: so we converse with God by acts of fear, reverence, joy, confidence, self-resignation, and the like.

Now, because we are in the body, and so cannot converse with God so purely, spiritually, and immediately, as the angels in heaven do, therefore it hath pleased God to appoint unto man ways and means of conversing with him, wherein he hath promised to communicate himself to the soul, and so to draw forth reciprocal acts of love, fear, reverence, confidence, resignation, dependence, and delight out of the same soul towards himself. Now, these ways or means may be reduced to three heads, Duties, Ordinances, and Providences; though indeed the two first may be contracted into one.

First, I will speak a word or two of Ordinances, such as the word and sacraments; for I shall name no more but these two. The preaching of the word is a way in which God doth usually meet the soul, to communicate life, 1 Pet. i. 23.; light, Psal. xix. 8.; warmth, Luke xxiii. 32.; growth, 1 Pet. ii. 2.; and the soul doth answer these impressions, as in water face answereth to face, by the acts of faith, love,

joy, meekness, and holy resolution. So also the administration of the sacraments is a way wherein God meets the soul, and communicates his love, sweetness, fulness, goodness, strength, and vigour to the soul; and it reflects upon him in the acts of holy complacency and delight, cheerfulness, thankfulness, and dependence.

2dly, DUTIES, these are also ways of converse with God, such as confession, petition, thanksgiving, conference, singing, meditation, observation. In all which God impresses something of himself upon the soul, and draws answerable affections of the soul unto himself, as might appear in the particular explication of them; but that would be too much a digression. Only I will here note by the way, the mistake of many low-spirited Christians, who know no other converse with God than the bare performance of these things: this they count the very top-stone of a Christian's perfections, the very flower of the spiritual life. But, alas! this is a gross mistake: there is, sure, something more sweet, savoury, satisfactory in the spiritual life, than the dry duty; there is marrow in the bone, or else a holy soul would not covet it with so much fervour. Converse with God in duties is a spiritual, savoury, filling enjoyment, distinct from the duties themselves. This must needs be, except we will allow to wicked and

In poetical men the same fainties that the most sanctified souls feed upon, and say, that the children's bread is common to the dogs as well as unto them. The soul doth not converse with God in duties barely when it prays, or meditates; for even godly souls themselves do many times find little converse with God in these, *viz.* when he suspends the influences of his graces, or their hearts are clogged or cloyed with earthly objects, or otherwise indisposed and shut up against him. It is not speaking to God that brings the soul really nigh unto him, nor bare thinking of God that advances the soul into the excellent state of feeling converse with him; even prayer itself may prove many times an empty sound, *vox et preterea nihil*; and meditation, that most excellent and genuine offspring of the soul, may prove a poor, dry, and sapless speculation. It is not enough to set up the sails, but there must be also wind to fill them. But then doth the soul converse with God in duties, when the dark places thereof become filled with his divine light, and the empty places thereof filled with his divine love, and the low and languishing affections thereof are ravished and revived with the powerful insinuations of his almighty grace; when God draws, and the soul runs: He puts in his finger by the hole of the door, and the very bowels of the soul are moved for him, as it is described,

Song v. 4. Then doth the soul converse with God in meditation and prayer, when the Spirit of God moves upon the face of the waters, when he kisses it with the kisses of his mouth; and the shaking soul finds itself marvellously settled, the doubting soul established, the frozen heart thawed, the benumbed affections warmed, the scant and contracted capacity of it enlarged and wonderfully widened, and its slow and sluggish motions quickened into a lively and chearful compliance with, and pursuit of the supreme and self-sufficient Good; when the soul finds its legs to run after that glorious object which is presented to it, lifts up its hands to lay hold upon the strength, the fullness, the faithfulness, the CHRIST of GOD; and bearing up itself upon the wings of faith and love, flies out to seek its rest and happiness, and no longer envies the birds of the altar, for itself enters into the holy of holies, and thro' the arms of its MEDIATOR throws itself into the very heart of God. In a word, and that shall be the word of God, then doth a soul converse with God in duties, when, with "open face beholding the glory of God," it doth not only admire it, but itself is "changed into the same image, from glory to glory," i. e. from grace to grace, 2 Cor. iii. ult.

3dly, PROVIDENCES, these are another way wherein the soul converses with God. Now, by

Providences we mean in general "the whole
 "work of God in governing the world, and all
 "things therein." And so indeed a religious
 enlarged soul, a mind freed from particular
 pinching cares, low and selfish ends, converses
 with God in beholding and observing God's
 settled course of governing the world. The
 whole heavens, earth, and sea, and the admi-
 rable order kept up in them, do teach the
 knowledge of God, and draw up the contem-
 plative soul into an observation and admiration
 of him in them, and the pious soul longs to
 find some impressions made upon itself by all
 these, and to be affected with God therein: it
 is not content with a bare speculation, but its
 meditation of God in these is sweet to it, as
 David's were, Psal. civ. 34. Particularly, God's
 providence towards mankind, as it doth most
 lively express his infinite love, justice, and wis-
 dom, so we ought to converse with him there-
 in, and in all the changes of any kind that be-
 fal man in the world, that befall all the king-
 doms of the world, the four great monarchies
 of it, and all other subordinate dominions,
 more especially in all the mutations that befall
 the church of God in the world, and all men
 of all sects and sorts therein, but most especial-
 ly ourselves. Labour to converse with that in-
 finite Mind, Wisdom, and Understanding that
 ordains and orders all the changes that befall

yourselves. Now, our conversing with God in the several changes that befall us in the world, is in general by endeavouring to serve the providence of God in every change. The providence of God serves itself even upon wicked men, and upon all creatures that do least understand it; but a godly man only knows how to serve the providence of God in the things that befall him: he hath no private selfish interest of his own, but counts it his interest chearfully and faithfully to serve the will of God, to be what God would have him be, to be without that which God would have him to want, and to do what God would have him do. Every wicked soul in the world sets up some trade for himself, and drives on some particular self-interest distinct from God: but a godly soul counts it his greatest honour and happiness to be nothing in himself, or for himself, but is wholly at the beck of his Creator; and, looking upon all his interests as being bound up in God, is solicitous for nothing else but to serve the will of God in his generation. So the life of holy David is described, Acts xiii. 36. "David
" in his generation having served the will of
" God," *i. e.* the providence of God, say the Dutch annot. translating the words in this order. A good man eyeing nothing but the great and blessed God in the world, and knowing that he was not made for himself, but for a

higher good, is only ambitious to be subservient to that infinite and sovereign Being; herein imitating his blessed SAVIOUR, who lived not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him, John vi. 38. and again, to seek the glory of him that sent him, John vii. 18. In a word, he looks upon himself, not as in himself, but in God, and labours to become *ὅλος τῷ τέκτονι*, wholly God's, and to live in the world only an instrument in the hands of him that worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will: that is, in general, for the conversing with God in all kind of changes in general.

Now, these changes are reduced to two heads, Prosperity and Adversity. In the first of these it is our duty to converse with God, and not with the creature-comforts which we do enjoy from him, as one might shew at large. But I am to speak of the latter, and to shew how we ought to converse with God in that: but first I must demonstrate, that it is our duty to do it; which was

III. The 3d thing I promised, *viz.* "To shew that it is the duty of God's people to study to converse with him aright in the way of his judgments in a time of affliction."

AND here, I hope, I need not be at pains to prove by Scripture, that besides the general business of a Christian's life, some particular and more especial behaviours are required of him

in an afflicted state ; all will grant it sure : besides, by that time I shall have declared what they are, I shall not need to prove that they are. Therefore, for the present, I shall content myself to give in three or four reasons of it, and so pass on. It is especially the duty of God's people to study to converse with him aright in the time of afflictions.

1st, BECAUSE " then especially it is hard to " do it." We are then very apt to be taken off from it, therefore we should then especially labour to pursue it, and perform it. We are then in imminent danger to be taken off from it, and that by these means.

I. " OUR senses do set us on work to converse with outward means," which, whilst we attend upon too eagerly, we neglect and forget God. This might appear by an induction of particular afflictions ; but that would be too long. I will only instance in one or two for explication. The sickness and painedness of the body calls out the mind to seek after, and converse with physicians ; bodily wants calls us to seek after bodily supplies ; and so all kind of distresses call out the soul to seek creature-relief. Call upon the sick and languishing patient to call upon, and hang upon divine help, to converse with God ; alas ! he hath enough to do to attend upon his pains and his pangs : tell him of ease, of recovery,

and he can hearken to you, for that's the news that he longs to hear. Call upon the poor pined beggar to seek relief from God, to converse with him; alas! he finds such a faintness in his limbs, such a gnawing of hunger, such a restless appetite within himself, that he can groan out nothing, but, Oh that one would give me bread to eat! In a word, the soul is more naturally addicted to mind its body to which it is joined than the God that joined it to that body. Hence you may observe two things by the way, *viz.* 1. The reason why so few persons repent in time of sickness; the sense of sickness drowns the sense of sin. 2. The reason why so few poor people, who are evermore conflicting with the necessities of the body, do not at all mind the concerns of their souls: the exigencies and straits of the body cry louder in their hearts than all the words and works of God. So that as health is the best time for repentance, so it seemeth that the best way to teach the poor, is to relieve them.

2. "THE corruptions of the heart are then most apt to make war against Heaven." This is the opinion of him who knows the temper of man too well, Job i. 11. "Put forth thine hand against him, and he will curse thee to thy face." And I am persuaded that the devil acts much by this observation, which makes him endeavour all he can to make many good men

poor, thinking thereby to make them less good, though the wise and merciful God wonderfully prevents him. For indeed the soul is so naturally tender of the body, that it is both God himself should touch it; if he do, it is ready to fret and storm, and fly in his face. Converse with God! saith the wicked king, why "this evil is of the Lord, what should I wait for the Lord any longer?" 2 Kings vi. 33. There are many corruptions of the soul that are most ready to clamour against God in a time of affliction, as fear, anger, unbelief, yea, and sinful self-love and creature-love: an affection that can never be taught to converse with God, yet will go crying after him, when he takes away any darling from it; as Phaltiel went crying after his wife, or rather crying against him; as Micah cried against the men of Dan, saying, "Ye have taken away my gods, and are gone away, and what have I more?" Judges xviii. 24.

3. "TEMPTATIONS do then come strongest from without." Then it is the devil's time to play his game: What, put up this reproach! what, will you sit down with this loss! up and revenge thyself. He that knows so well the temper of man's heart so ready to curse God when he touches him; Job ii. 5. will not fail to touch the heart, and tempt it to curse him indeed, Job ii. 9.—"Curse God and die."

THE 2d reason why we ought especially to study to converse with God in the time of afflictions, is because "that is a time wherein we are most apt to think ourselves excused from this duty;" as if it were allowed us in our extremity to forget God, and mind ourselves only; and that not only in respect of these bodily straits and distresses, which I named under the last head, but in respect of our own passions. When the afflicting hand of God is upon us, pressing and grieving us, and taking our beloved comforts from us, we are apt to indulge our own private and selfish passions, care, fear, sorrow, complainings, &c. yea, to think we are in some sense allowed to indulge them. How willingly do we suffer ourselves to be drawn into a converse with ourselves, to be contracted, as it were, into ourselves, and suffer ourselves to be carried down the stream of our own passions, which at other times we should think it were our duty to resist! Even as the heart in naturals draws home to it in a time of danger the blood that was dispersed abroad in the body, as it were to defend itself; so the heart in morals gathers home its powers and affections, which were formerly bestowed here and there; to employ them all about itself in a time of sore affliction. And we are apt to think ourselves excusable too, in so doing; so that if God himself should ask a distressed soul, as he

did Jonah, Dost thou well to be careful, fearful, sorrowful, querulous, because of those afflictions, losses, distresses, that are upon thee? it would go nigh to give him the same answer; I do well to be sorrowful, yea, and to refuse to be comforted. There seems to be allowed us some natural affections in case of extreme affliction, which how far they are lawful I will not now dispute: but sure I am, that if such be allowed us, they must not be wild extravagants, wandering without the bounds of religion and conscience, as if God had laid the reins upon the neck of the soul, and given it leave to indulge itself in what passions it would for a certain time, as the daughter of Jephthah was allowed to go whither she would, wailing upon the mountains for two months. We are never allowed any passions or affections, sure, that do not comply with the will of God, and consist with our submission thereunto: but whatever they are, I find, that under the presence of those, some men are apt to be carried into strange inordinacies, and commit many passionate outrages; and indeed the best of men are too prone to suspend and interrupt that lively and feeling converse with God, which they ought to maintain even when they smart most.

3dly, "BECAUSE then is a time when there is
" more especial use for, and need of such con-

“verse with God.” And that, 1. To give rest to the soul. In prosperity men forget God, and yet make a shift to find some kind of rest in their pleasures, friends, employments; some take comfort in their cups and companions, and indeed all are apt to fancy a contentment in creature-enjoyments. But in a time of great affliction all these are gone, or at least have no favour in them, and where shall the weary soul find rest then? Then there’s no shew of rest but in God alone; when all other props fail, then either catch hold of God or fall. There is now nothing left to give any settlement or contentment to the soul but God alone; and in him there is ease to the sick, rest to the weary, settlement to the shaking, contentment to the troubled Christian. Therefore converse with God in the day of greatest affliction, which is the same counsel in effect with that of our SAVIOUR, Matth. xi. 28. “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” 2. There is need of it to give relief to the body also.

And so conversing with God in a right manner is the best policy, the surest way to recovery and relief. See what a speedy cure there is in it, Psal. xxi. 5, 6. “They looked unto him, and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed: This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out

“of all his troubles.” In vain is conversing with friends, physicians, counsellors, in vain is all creature-converse without this ; no rest to the soul, no ease to the body in a time of affliction without converse with God : so that a man in affliction estranged from God, straggling off from God, is altogether miserable. In a word, separate a soul from God, in prosperity his enjoyments are low, and in adversity the want of them is very bitter ; so that there is good reason why a Christian should study to converse with God in the way of his judgments.—But the great art is to know how. This therefore I now come to,

IV. In the 4th place, To shew particularly, “how we are to converse with God in afflictions.” Now there are two ways of explaining this.

1. By shewing with what attributes of God we are to converse.

2. By what acts of the soul. But I shall bring both these into one.

1st, We ought to converse with the absolute and unlimited Sovereignty of God, whereby he, as a free and supreme agent, doth what he will, and none can say unto him, “what dost thou?” Dan. iv. 35. This Job often eyes and owns, particularly in chap. ix. 12. “He taketh away, who can hinder him? who will say unto him, What dost thou?” This we must

also eye often, and own heartily; this we may well argue from God's creating of us; he that made us thus without any constraint, can he not, may he not make us otherwise, and alter us without restraint? So Job argues, ch. i. 21. We may also argue it from the subordinate sovereignty, and inferior supremacy of men; even a monarch among men doth whatsoever he pleases, and who may say unto him, "What dost thou?" Eccl. viii. 3. 4. Yea, a very centurion hath a kind of sovereignty in his sphere, over as many as are under him; he saith unto one man, "Go, and he goeth; and to another, "Do this, and he doth it," Matth. viii. 9. And shall we not then acknowledge a sovereign power, and independent absolute authority in the great and blessed God over the whole creation, the workmanship of his own hands? So the good centurion argues, and infers, in the place last quoted. Nay, as the apostle saith in one place, "We have fathers of our flesh," who use us at their pleasure, and we do not gainsay their authority; we do not say to our father, "What begetteth thou?" nor to our mother, "What hast thou brought forth?" Isa. xlv. 10. Nay, if these similitudes will not teach you, I will say to you as God to the prophet, "Arise, go down to the potter's house;" there I will cause you to learn this lesson; he maketh or marreth his vessels of clay as oft as

he pleaseth; and are not ye in the hand of the LORD, as the clay is in the hand of the potter? Jer. xviii. 6. I speak the more to this, in as much as I find, that however men give God good words, and confess his dominion over them and theirs, yet when it comes to it, that he touches them in any of their darling comforts, they are ready to clamour against him in their hearts, as if he did them some wrong, if not to curse him to his face. Certainly there is some atheistical opinion of propriety, that in some degree or other is apt to steal into the most devout minds: and sure I am, we do not only barely offend, but we do ourselves much hurt; we wound our own peace, we shake the settledness of our own hearts, we put ourselves into briers: in a word, we both lessen our creature-comforts, and multiply our griefs, and aggravate our sorrows, by calling things our own; if we had not taken them to be our own, it would not have troubled us to part with them.

BE sure therefore to eye and own the absolute and unlimited sovereignty of God. But that is not all: it is not enough to believe it, we must converse with it otherwise than by thinking of it, or assenting to it. Then do we converse with the sovereignty of God, *1. When the powerful sense of it doth*
“silence quarrelling, yea murmurings, yea

“even disputings in the soul.” We may indeed modestly contend with men concerning their dealings with us; the potsherd may strive with the potsherds of the earth, but it must not say to the Potter, why hast thou made me thus? A pacate and quiet frame of heart is a real conversing with the sovereignty of God: so did Aaron when he held his peace, Lev. x. 3. and Job, when he attributed nothing unseemly to God, chap. i. *ult.*

2. “WHEN the sense of it doth suppress self-will.” This is an unruly lust in the soul, *γίγαντιόδης ψύχη*, a giant-like spirit warring against Heaven, and breeding hate continually. This is that which maintains a *meum* and *tuum*, even with God himself, that sets up interests, (as the Jews set up princes, Hos. viii. 4.), but not by God, yea, indeed, in opposition to him. This is the seditious party in the soul that is always crying out, We will not have this man to rule over us: and when that darling interest, which this proud rival hath set up, is touched of God, and smitten and blasted from heaven, it is ready to fret and storm, yea, and to think it hath reason to be angry. If this son of the bondwoman were cast out, Abraham’s family would be all of a piece, all in order, and at rest. If this undisciplined and perverse spirit were quite banished, oh what a calm day would it be in the soul! what fair and sweet correspondence

would there be between God and his creature ! for certainly this is the Jonah that raises the storm, and makes the great deeps of the soul that it cannot rest, but do perpetually roll and toss, yea, and cast out mire and dirt continually. But, alas ! I doubt this spirit is not quite laid, no not in the most spiritual man : the best of men are ready to nourish and hatch up some darling, some private interest or other^d of their own, distinct from God, and the grand interest of their souls, which God himself must not touch ; some gourd or other that the cold wind must not blow upon. He is a blessed man indeed, who doth so understand that he lives and moves in God alone, and is so overpowered with the sense of the infinite goodness and holiness of God, and the absolute perfection of his divine will, as that he reckons it his greatest perfection to be nothing in himself, nor have nothing of his own distinct from God, but only studies to be great in God, to be filled with God, to live to him and for him, to enjoy all things as in and under him, who counts it his only interest to quit all self-interest, and particular ends, and to be freely at the disposal of the highest mind, conformable to the highest good, cheerfully compliant with the uncreated will. Potiphar had so committed all to Joseph, in the sense of his great faithfulness, that “ he knew “ not ought he had, save the bread that he

“did eat,” Gen. xxxix. 6. But this similitude is too low: a godly soul should commit all its interest, its life and livelihood, and all to God, in the sense of his sovereignty, and not know ought that he hath, no not his own life, but despise it in comparison of uncreated life, as Job speaks, chap. ix. 21. Methinks the sovereignty of God speaks such language to the soul and in it, as Eli to Samuel, “My son, hide nothing from me, keep nothing back of all that thou hast:” and the pious soul should not, with foolish Rachel, conceal any selfish interest, so as not to be willing to part with it, when its sovereign Lord and Father comes to search the tent, but (with allusion to Amos vi. 10.) when God comes to ferret out all self-interests, and shall ask, “Is there any such yet with thee?” should be able to answer boldly, No, there is none. Blessed is the man that is in such a case; blessed is the man whose only interest it is to serve the will of the LORD! Well, improve the infinite sovereignty of God to this end, and work it upon and into your own hearts, that all self-will may stoop to it; and let the main interest of your souls be so planted and established in your souls, that no other interest may be able to grow by it: charm your own self-will with such severe reproofs as this is, Either deny thyself, O my soul, or deny thyself to be a creature; either be wholly

at God's command, or call him not thy sovereign.

3. "WHEN the sense of it doth beget reverence in the soul towards God." We ought not only to be subject to the rod of God, but even to reverence him when he correcteth with it; and so not only to accept of the rod, but to kiss it too. And surely if the fathers of our flesh correct us, and we give them reverence, Heb. xii. 9. much more ought we to reverence the sovereign FATHER both of flesh and spirit. This is a devout act of the soul, whereby it looks up and adores the infinite and sovereign Majesty, and thinks equitable and honourable thoughts of him, even when he is in the way of his judgments. And these are the proper acts of a soul conversing with God's sovereignty in the time of afflictions. When we are silent before him, subject unto him, and reverencing of him, then we do really and truly converse with him as our almighty and absolute Sovereign, But God's authority and prerogative, though it may silence, will scarce satisfy; such a corrupt and rebellious pass are our natures grown to. Therefore,

2dly, CONVERSE with the perfect and infinite Righteousness of God in the time of afflictions; that divine perfection, whereby he renders to every man what is just and due, and no more. This we are to eye and own, and sincerely to

acknowledge, even in the time of our greatest extremity, after the example of Daniel, chap. ix. 14. "The LORD our God is righteous in all his works;" and of the godly Levites, Neh. ix. 33. "Thou art just in all that is brought upon us, thou hast done right." Argue with Abraham, Gen. xviii. 25. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Can Righteousness itself err in judgment? shall the timber say unto the rule, why hast thou measured me thus? or to the line, thou art crooked? "Are not my ways equal?" saith the LORD, Ezek. xviii. 25. Are not the LORD's ways equal? let your souls say so too. Be ye firmly persuaded of the infinite and incorruptible Righteousness and Equity of God. But that is not all; we do not then converse with the righteousness of God, when we do believe it, or acknowledge it; a very Pharaoh may be brought to make such a confession, Exod. ix. 27. "The LORD is righteous, and I and my people are wicked:" But then do we converse with the righteousness of God, in general, when the sense of it doth give a rational satisfaction to the soul. And indeed, whereas the sovereignty of God is enough to silence, yet his righteousness had need to be called in to administer satisfaction: the former is sufficient to stop the mouth, but there is need of the latter to settle the heart. And indeed, methinks it is a heart-settling consideration:

for how can the interest of the creature be better secured than in the hands of a righteous God? where can we venture all we have better than in such a certain and steady bottom? how can we better trust ourselves than on such firm and even ground? We will trust ourselves far with an upright and righteous man; and if we hear of the miscarriage of any interest of ours at any time, it doth mightily calm and satisfy our hearts, if we are assured that it was in the hands of a just and upright person: much more rational and steady satisfaction may the infinite righteousness of God administer even in the time of the greatest affliction, if it be duly wrought into the heart. But more particularly,

I. "THE powerful sense of the righteousness of God should make us sensible and serious." It becomes us seriously to ponder, duly to weigh, and in good earnest to lay to heart, all that is done to us by a righteous God. We use slightly to pass by, and slightly to esteem the words or actions of vain man: but it is not for nothing that the righteous God afflicts any man, in any measure, at any time. The voice of God, though it be not always articulate, yet is always significant. Will a lion roar for nothing? Surely, every action of the righteous God hath a meaning in it; a hair falls not from our head, nor a sparrow to the ground, without

him ; much less, sure, do greater changes befall us without him. And in all things he is infinitely righteous. Oh how doth this call us to sensibleness and seriousness ! how ought all the powers of the soul to be awakened to attention when the righteous God utters his dreadful voice, and the whole frame of the heart and life to be composed under his heavy hand ! Now, if ever, one would “ say of laughter, it is “ mad ;” one would reckon trifling to be a kind of profaneness, and judge that foolish jestings do almost border upon blasphemy, formerly not convenient, now not lawful ; for indeed a vain, frothy, light, trifling spirit, in the day of affliction, is in a sense a blaspheming of the righteousness of God. As a consequent of this,

2. “ It should put us upon self-examination.” Nature itself had taught the heathenish mariners to inquire where the fault was in a storm, Jonah i. 7. much more may the knowledge of God’s infinite righteousness teach us. So may the holy word too, that word in Lam. iii. 40. “ Let us search and try our ways,” &c. and many others. Now do the faculties of the godly soul, being awakened, begin to cast lots upon themselves, to find out the guilty party : and certainly God hath a great hand in ordering these lots ; he doth ordinarily shew unto man his sin, even by the verdict of his own heart. Conscience, I mean, is God’s vicegerent in the

soul: and, though 'tis true, this judge is oft-times corrupted and bribed, or at least over-ruled in prosperity, yet God instructs it to speak good sense, and to speak out, and speak the truth in the time of affliction. I believe they hit the nail upon the head, who cried out one to another, " Verily we are guilty concerning " our brother," Gen. xlii. 21. Another cries, Verily I am guilty concerning my master, concerning my people, guilty concerning my wife, concerning my children, concerning my estate, my time, my talents; and it may be all true. I believe the heathen was in the right, who looked upon his hands and feet, and cried out, " As I have done, so God hath requited me," Judg. i. 7.; and the Babylonish monarch harped upon a right string, after he was come to his right wits again, Dan. iv. ult.—" Those " that walk in pride he is able to abase." God hath not given to our faculties any infallibility indeed, but he enables them to make good guesses, and, I am verily persuaded, doth many times lay the hand upon the right sore, and order this secret lottery from heaven; so that that faculty, or that frame, or that action, which stands convicted in the court of conscience, is seldom held guiltless in the court of heaven.

3. " It should work us to humiliation and re-
" formation; an heart broken, and a conver-

“sation healed of its breaches.” By humiliation I mean a heart broken, purely, properly, and spiritually for sin. I do not mean by it, an heart broken for losses and afflictions, and bowing down itself heavily under the burden of its distresses; no: nor a heart broken for sin as viewing it only in the calamitous effects and bitter fruits of it, which I doubt not is the humiliation of most. Many may say concerning their humiliation, (to use the prophet’s words in a different sense, Zech. xiii. 6.), “These are the wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends,” by the loss of my friends, the loss of my health, the loss of my goods; these tears that you see, these groans that you hear, are nothing but the scars which the sore hath left behind it, and the wails which the rod hath made. I doubt our very sorrow for sin in a time of affliction, admits of a mixture of carnal self and passion, and so of sin too. But I mean a pure, spiritual, proper sorrow and hatred of sin; which I know may be broached by sharp afflictions, and have vent given it by piercing the vessel; but that is not the proper cause and ground of it. Moses, in his joy, had an eye to the “recompence of reward,” Heb. xi. 26. and so a Christian, in his sorrow, may have respect to the recompence of his sin, I mean his afflictions; but it is not primarily and principally caused by these: for

though these dreadful showers from heaven should cease, yet the stream of his eyes, or at least the fountain of his heart, would not cease issuing forth bitter waters; though the righteousness of God do serve to give vent to godly sorrow, yet it is the goodness and holiness of God that gives it. Do we sorrow for sin because it spoiled us of our comforts, strip'd us of our ornaments? then, sure, we think there is something in the world worse than sin, for which we should bewail it, and hate it, and so, consequently, that there is something better than God, for which we would love him. Alas! how apt are we to run into practical blasphemy before we are aware! In a word, to decide this controversy, our afflictions, losses, distresses in the world, may possibly be as a bucket to draw up this water of godly sorrow, but they must not be the cistern to receive and hold it. Serious and spiritual humiliation is a real conversing with the righteousness of God: to meet God is indeed to fall down before him, and to converse with him is to ly down under him; the truth of which temper is best evidenced by that excellent commentator, the life of a Christian: this doth best declare the nature and interpret the meaning of heart humiliation. He that breaks off his sins doth best make it appear that his heart is broken for them. If you would know whether there has been rain in the

night, look upon the ground, and that will discover. Oh my friends! if the dust be laid, if all earthly joys, contentments, pleasures, concernments be laid, you may conclude your sorrow was a shower sent into your souls from heaven.

If you see a boy both sobbing and minding his book, you may conclude he hath some right sense of his master's severity. Conversion to God is the most proper and real conversing with him in the way of his judgments: so he himself interprets in that complaint made, Isa. ix. 13. "The people turneth not to him that smiteth them," &c. That which happened to Moses when he had been in the mount with God, Exod. xxxiv. 29. should also be the condition of every good Israelite, when he hath been with God in the valley, the vale of tears, an afflicted state, his face should shine, his conversation should witness that he had been with God; the smell of this fire should pass upon his garments, his whole outward man; the spirit of mourning should be demonstrated by the spirit of burning. If God from heaven set fire on the standing corn of our worldly comforts, we must answer him from within, and set fire on the stubble of our worldly lusts and corruptions. Let me change our SAVIOUR's words therefore a little, Matth. vi. 18. and exhort you earnestly; thou Christian, when thou fastest,

when thou humblest thy soul for sin, “wash thy face” also, cleanse thy outward conversation from all sinful pollution, that thou mayst appear to be humbled indeed: and this shall be accounted as a true and real conversing with the righteousness of God in the time of affliction.

3dly, CONVERSE with the Faithfulness of God. This attribute of God hath respect unto his promises, and therefore it may be you will think strange that I should speak of this in a discourse of afflictions, as not having place there at all. Every one will readily acknowledge, that God’s Sovereignty and Righteousness do clearly appear in his judgments, but how his Faithfulness can be exercised therein they see not. What! faithful in punishing, in plaguing, in visiting, in afflicting, distressing his creature, how can that be? Many will be ready to think rather that God is not faithful at such a time, when he denies what he had promised to give, takes away what he had promised to continue; when he plagues David every morning, when he had promised him that the plague should not come nigh his dwelling; when he brings Abijah to the grave, to whom he had promised that his days should be long upon the land, and Job to the dunghill, to whom all the promises were made both of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. Is this faithfulness? doth

God fulfil his promises by frustrating them? Notwithstanding all this, it seems that the faithfulness of God hath place in the afflictions of his people; for so saith David expressly, Psal. cxix. 75. "I know that in faithfulness" "thou hast afflicted me," if indeed faithfulness be taken properly in that place. Neither indeed need it seem so strange as some men make it; for God hath promised his covenant-people to visit their iniquity with a rod, Ps. lxxxix. 32. "the rod of a man," a fatherly chastisement, as it is explained, 2 Sam. vii. 14. where this seems to be made a branch of the covenant, and is understood by many as a promise. But if that be not a plain promise, I am sure there is one in Psal. lxxxiv. 11. "No good thing will" "he withhold from them that walk upright-ly." And if no good thing, then no correction neither; for that is often good and profitable for the people of God in this world, for many excellent ends, which, considering the nature of man, cannot well be accomplished without it, as might appear in many particulars; but it is not needful to run out into them. God will take more care of his own people than of the rest of the world, and will rather correct them than not reduce them. It is their main happiness that he takes care for, and he will in kindness take out of the way whatever hinders it, and give whatever may promote it. God's

thoughts are not as our thoughts; he judges otherwise of health, riches, liberty, friends, &c. than we do. We are apt to measure God by ourselves, and our own affections, which is the ground of our mistake in this business: we mind the things that please our flesh, our senses, our appetite, our fancy; but God minds the things that concern our souls and their true happiness. The saints are much dearer to God, and much more beloved of him, than they are to themselves; and therefore he will not give them what is sweet, but what is meet; he will give them what makes for their real and eternal happiness, whether they would have it or not. He loves them with a strong and powerful love, and will not deny them any thing that is truly good for them, though they cry out under it; nor allow them any thing that is really hurtful, though they cry after it. So will a wise father upon earth do by his children, to the best of his skill and power; much more will God then, *qui plusquam patrum amorem gerit in suos*, whose bowels are infinitely larger and stronger than those of a father. Now then, labour to converse with the faithfulness of God in the time of afflictions, which is by studying the covenant and the promises of it, and your present condition, and comparing them together, and observing how consonant and agreeable they are, each interpreting other; as also

by persuading your hearts of the consistency of afflictions with divine love and favour, and by studying to reconcile the hand and heart of God together. But especially converse with it practically, by a holy establishment and settlement of heart under all afflictions: for, whereas afflictions in themselves are apt to beget a fearfulness, despondency, or at least fluctuation in the soul, the lively sense of God's faithfulness in inflicting them will settle and sustain it; it is a firm and consistent thing, upon which the shaking soul may settle safely, and centre itself boldly.

4thly, CONVERSE with the Holiness and unspotted Purity of God. He is angry and sins not; he corrects for sin without sin; "Fury is not in me, saith the LORD," Isa. xxvii. 4. There is no passionate, malicious temper in the pure and holy God, no revengeful appetite to feed upon the blood of his creature: he is of purer eyes than to behold the least iniquity, and of a purer nature than any way to miscarry in any of his dealings or dispensations. Converse then with this infinite holiness of God; keep up pure, equitable, honourable thoughts of him in your hearts; take heed of fancying to yourselves a God guilty of passion or partiality, or carried away with such weak and mixed affections as we ourselves are. But, more practically, converse with God's holiness in the

time of afflictions, by laying even little sins greatly to heart; little sins, compared with infinite Holiness and Purity, ought to be matter of great and serious sorrow to a sensible soul. Again, take heed of the least miscarriages under affliction, of departing from God in the least. This I know is the great duty and care of every tender-hearted Christian at all times; but, I conceive, we ought more especially to press it upon our hearts in the time of affliction, because we are then most apt to indulge some kind of human passions, which we call natural affections, as if we had a licence to care, and fear, and grieve, and complain, not only in an extraordinary, but even in an irregular manner. Oh! let the sense of God's infinite purity and perfect holiness check and awe those very natural affections, be they what they will, if they offer to exceed their bounds, and overflow their banks. But this I touched upon before under another head, amongst the reasons of the doctrine: therefore,

5thly, CONVERSE with the almighty Power of God. That God is infinite and almighty in power I need not undertake to demonstrate: no man hath read a leaf in scripture, nor indeed turned over one leaf in the book of the creatures, who hath not learned this. I need not, sure, turn you to any particular mighty work of God; they that instance in his letting

loose the virtues of the creatures, in the case of the universal deluge, or binding up of their influences, as in the case of the three captive Jews, and of Daniel and Jonah, when he kept the fire from burning, and forbade the lions to eat the one, and the fish to digest the other, whom he had swallowed, make a poor guess at Almightyness, but a faint essay to describe it. The creation of the least creature out of nothing is an higher argument of divine Power than the command of the greatest that is already created. Eye God duly in the notion of a Creator, yea, the Creator of your own souls and bodies, and you have enough to fill you with everlasting admiration, as David was filled, Psal. cxxxix. 14. "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." But it is not enough to eye, or acknowledge, or admire, we must yet do more if we will rightly converse with the Almightyness of God, viz. by the acts of reverence and dependence.

I. "REVERENCE that almighty and glorious God in your hearts", who can bring *quidlibet ex quodlibet*, any thing out of any thing, yea, out of nothing, yea, any thing to nothing in a moment. Reverence that power of God, that can pour contempt upon princes; that can bring Job, the greatest of all the men of the East, to ly in the ashes, and make his bed in the dunghill; that can send home Naomi empty,

who went out full and flourishing. Hath he done so by you, debased you when you were high, tumbled you down from the clouds, and rolled you in the dust, emptied you when you were full, withered you when you were fresh and flourishing? Let not God lose the glory of his almighty power; reverence that glorious hand of God.

2. "REST upon the same almighty God," who can also bring up the same Job from the dunghill, and set him with princes, and fill empty Naomi with a famous offspring, throwing into her lap one of the ancestors of the MESSIAH according to the flesh. The same power that caused your sun to go down at mid-day, when you least suspected, can also cause it to rise at midnight, when you least hope. Dwell not upon creature probabilities or improbabilities; but lift up thyself, believing soul, and be assured, that God can do what he will, and he will do what is good for them that love him, according to the dictates of unsearchable Wisdom and Goodness. Thou that art rolled in the dust, yet arise, and roll thyself upon those almighty arms that brought thee thither, and are able to advance thee; as I have seen a child thrown off by his father, and thrown down to the ground in a seeming displeasure, yet clinging to the same hand, and will not let it go, till at length he rise up again by it: a fit em-

blem of a child of God, whom his heavenly Father seems as if he had cast off. The wounding hand of God is apt to amaze indeed, and to beget consternation and astonishment; but remember, the same hand that wounds can also heal; he that breaks us, can also make up all our breaches: let this beget confidence and dependence. God never wounds deeper than that he can easily bind up the wound again; never throws his people so low as that they should be out of his reach. Take heed therefore of unseemly despondencies; cast not away your confidence, which shall have a recompence, if ye maintain it: a recompence, I say; for that God who can recover the setting sun, and exalt it in its beauty and brightness, and doth so every morning, who can clothe the forlorn and naked trees with leaves and fruits, who can recover the verdure of the withering grass, and doth so every year, he can also cause light to arise to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, Isa. ix. 2.

HE who could give unto Amaziah much more than that which he parted with at his command, 2 Chron. xxv. 9.; who could turn again the captivity of Job, and give him double for what he had taken from him, chap. ult. 10. he can surely make his people "glad according to the days wherein he hath afflicted them, and the years wherein they have seen evil,"

Pfal. xc. 15. ; he can recompense and restore to his penitent people the fruits which the locusts and the caterpillars have consumed, according to his promise, Joel ii. 25. ; he can recompense to his people the comforts of health and liberty, which sickness hath consumed, the comforts of friends and relations which the grave hath devoured. He who made the springs dry, Jer. li. 36. can as easily make "the parched ground "to become a pool," and "the thirsty land "springs of water," Isa. xxxv. 7. as you find both elegantly joined together, Psal. cvii. 33. 35. "He turneth water springs into dry grounds," *et sic vicissim*. Say not therefore with the captive Jews, Ezek. xxxvii. 11. "Our bones are "dried, and our hope is lost," &c. for God can cause even "those dry bones to live." Say not with that low-spirited courtier, 2 Kings vii. 19. "If the LORD should make windows in heaven," then might such plenty be in Samaria ; for he did accomplish it, and yet not rain it from heaven neither : but say rather with Job, chap. xiii. 15. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust "in him ;" and with the three worthies, Dan. iii. 17. "Our God whom we serve is able to "deliver us out of thine hand, O king ;" so he is able to deliver us out of thine hand, O enemy, O prison, O sickness, yea, out of thine hand, O grave. If we despond and be dejected both in mind and body at the same time,

then is our condition indeed sad and shameful; nay, we do more reproach God by such a temper in our affliction, than he reproacheth us in afflicting us. Make it appear, Christians, that though God hath cast you down, yet you do believe that he hath not cast you off; and that you, although you be sorely shaken by him, yet are not shaken off from him. Thus you shall glorify the almighty power of God in the day of your visitation.

6thly, CONVERSE with the infinite and unsearchable Wisdom of God, especially with the wisdom of God in reference to his judgments, and our afflictions. He is infinitely wise in reference to our afflictions: For, 1. He knows what, and what manner, and what measure of correction we stand in need of. 2. When and how best to deliver us. 3. How to make the best use of all for our good.

1. "HE knows what, and what manner, and what measure of correction we stand in need of." He is that wise Physician, who knows what humour is most predominant in the souls of his servants, and what is the most proper medicine to purge it out; where the most corrupt blood is settled, and at what vein to let it out. He is infinitely knowing of the various tempers and distempers of his servants, and can apply himself suitably to them all. And as to the measure and degree, he is also infinitely wise and exact: he weighs out the afflictions

of his people to a grain for quantity, and measures them to a day and hour for duration. He did not miss of his time, no not one day in four hundred and thirty years, Exod. xii. 41.; so many years of bondage were determined upon the people, and after these years were expired, the very next day the hosts of the LORD went up out of Egypt. And as for measure, he observes a certain proportion, as you may see in that full text, Isa. xxviii. 27. 28. As the husbandman uses different ways of purging and cleansing different sorts of grain, beating the fitches with a staff, and cummin with a rod, because they are a weaker sort of grain, and will not endure hard usage, but bruising the bread corn, because threshing will not suffice, and he is loth to break it all to pieces with turning his cart-wheels upon it. An elegant similitude, whereby God insinuateth his different ways of correcting his people, and observing a suitableness to their strength and temper, when less would not do, and more would overdo : he must correct so far as to bruise, but will be sure not to break and spoil. He that saith to the proud waves of the swelling sea, "Hitherto shall ye come, and no further," Job xxxviii. 11. hath the same command over these metaphorical waves, those floods of affliction, which he lets loose upon his people, and they cannot go an inch further than he hath appointed : he saith,

Hitherto shall this sickness, this mortality, this persecution go, and no further; and even these storms, and this sea obey him. Now we converse with this instance of divine wisdom, not only when we observe it, and acknowledge it, but,

(1.) "WHEN it begets in us a friendly and "charitable temper towards second causes:" when we are at peace with the whole creation, even with enemies themselves, and in perfect charity with those very plagues and sicknesses that do arrest us, rather admiring and delighting in their subserviency to God, than at all maligning their severe influences upon us. A good man is so much in love with the pure and holy and perfect will of God, that he desires also to fall in love with, at least he is at peace with every thing that executes it, that serves the will of his heavenly FATHER: he sees no reason in the world to fall out with, and fret against any man, or any thing that is a means to afflict him, but views them all as instruments in the hand of God, readily serving his will, and doing his pleasure, and under this notion is charitably affected towards them all. Observe a little, and admire, how David was reconciled to the rod, because it was in the hand of his Father, and seems to kiss it for the relation that it had to the divine will, 2 Sam. xvi. 11. "Let him alone, and let him curse, for the

"**LORD** hath bidden him." This gracious soul is so wonderfully in love with the will of God, that he could almost find in his heart to be reconciled to sin itself, if it do accomplish it, and to be friends with the wrath of man, if it work the righteousness of God. And if David can be so charitably affected towards a cursing Shimei, viewing him as an instrument in the hand of God, methinks we may be almost in love with any thing under that notion, and much rather say concerning a poor harmless sickness, Let it alone, so let it put us to pain, for God hath sent it. To this sense may a devout soul draw the words of our SAVIOUR concerning the woman in Matth. xxvi. 10. "Why trouble ye the woman? she hath wrought a good work upon me:" Why do ye interrupt and disturb this disease? why do you fret against this persecutor? why do you repine at this prison? it executes the will of my God upon me. What though these men pour out their venom in such abundance? what though this disease spend its influences upon my body so plentifully? there is no waste in all this; there is need of just so much; God doth not lavish out his arrows in vain, nor shoot at rovers, as Jonathan did, who cozened his lad, making him believe he shot at a mark, when he shot at none. A soul overpowered with the sense of God's infinite wisdom in appointing, measuring, time-

ing all afflictions, will easily be reconciled to a poor harmless creature, which is set on and taken off at his pleasure.

(2.) "WHEN it begets in us a holy acquiescence and resting in God," which is opposed to a larger and disorderly hastening towards deliverance. Then do we indeed own and honour the skill of our chyrurgeon, when we do quietly suffer the corrosive plaisters to ly on, and do not offer to pluck them off, notwithstanding the smart they put us to. And surely he who believes the infinite wisdom of God, who knows what, and what manner and measure of correction we stand in need of, will not make haste to be delivered from under his hand, but composeth himself quietly, as young Samuel laid himself down, and when he was called, answered chearfully, "Speak, LORD, for thy servant heareth."

A SOUL sensible of God's infinite wisdom in this particular, argues thus, Who am I, poor worm, shallow creature, that I should contend with infinite Wisdom about the time or manner of my being in the world? why did not I also undertake to appoint him the time and place of my being born? shall I say it is too much, when infinite Wisdom thinks it is not enough? Cease, wrangling soul, and be at rest, for the LORD deals wisely with thee. Such a soul, so conversing with the all-wise God, dare freely refer all

to him, venture all with him ; if he smite him on the one cheek, he dare turn to him the other ; if he take away his coat, he dare offer him his cloak also ; if he takes away his liberty, he dare truit him with his life too ; if he smite him in some of his comforts, he dare turn to him the rest also : for he knows that infinite Wisdom cannot err in judgment, nor miscarry in his dispensations.

2. " God knoweth when and how best to deliver us." This necessarily follows upon the former. To him all times, and all things past, present, and to come, are equally present ; in one single act of understanding he doth wonderfully comprehend both causes and events, sicknesses and cures, afflictions and deliverances. Let the atheistical world cry, These are they that are forsaken, whom no man careth for ; there is no hope for them in their God, as their manner is to blaspheme ; still the promise stands unrepealed in both Testaments, " I will never leave you, nor forsake you ;" though the case be never so extreme and desperate, still the apostle's words hold good, 2 Pet. ii. 9. " The LORD knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations." If all passages be blocked up, he will rather make a gap in the sea than his people shall not escape, Exod. xiv. And this way and time of God's delivering is the most excellent, suitable, and

certain, as might abundantly appear in many particulars: but that would be a digression. In the general, be assured that God's way is the best way of deliverance, and his time is also the best time. He that sits as a refiner of silver, knows how and when to take out the metal, that it be purified and not hurt. Here I might enter into a large discourse, and shew you how the judgment of man is ordinarily deceived, and his expectations disappointed, which he had built upon creature probabilities, when in the mean time the purpose of God takes place in a far better and more conformable deliverance of his servants. But it may suffice to have hinted it only.

OUR duty is to converse with this instance of divine wisdom by the exercises of patience and hope. If God seems to tarry long, yet wait patiently for his appearance; for he will appear in the most acceptable time, and "in the end ye shall consider it," and acknowledge it. Take heed of limiting the Holy One of Israel, as that murmuring generation did, Pf. lxxviii. 41. Take heed of fixing of your deliverance to such or such a train and series of causes which you have laid in your own heads, and of engaging God to act by your method; if God be a wise agent, it is fit he should be a free agent too. Bear up, Christian soul, faint not when thou art rebuked of him; "Cast thy burden upon

"the LORD," and he will, in due time, find out a way either of lessening it, or removing it. "You have heard of the patience of Job, and "you have seen the end of the LORD," James v. 11. Be you patient, and you shall see it too; a better end than ever you could have accomplished by your own art and industry. In the mean time, cherish in your hearts a lively hope of an happy issue; for your lives and comforts are all hid in him, in whom also are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. As the consideration of infinite wisdom, in knowing how and when best to deliver us, may settle our hearts that they do not rise up as a foam upon the waters through impatience; so it may bear up our hearts, that they do not sink within us, as a stone in the waters, through desperation.

3. "God knoweth how to make the best use "of all for our good." I say, of all, both of the affliction, the manner and measure of it, of his delay, and of the season which he chuses to redeem us in. He can make Paul's imprisonment turn to his advantage, Phil. i. 19.; Job's captivity to redound to his far greater state, chap. ult.; Joseph's banishment to make him great, and Manasseh's to make him good. This is a large theme, and therefore I dare not rise into it particularly; take all in one word from the apostle, Rom. viii. 28. "All things do work

“ together for good to them that love God.” Whatever the premisses be, the only wise God knows how to draw a happy conclusion from them. Get a firm belief of this radicated in your hearts, and converse with the wisdom of God in this instance of it by the great grace of self-resignation. The sovereignty of God may well work us into a resignation of our interests, and comforts, and concernments to him; but this infinite wisdom of God ought in reason to work us into a resignation even of our very wills unto him. Oh! this debasing of self-will, this self-resignation is a noble and ingenuous act of a pious soul, (for so I dare call him in whom it is found), whereby it honours God greatly in all that comes upon it! A godly soul, considering itself ignorant of many things, burdened with many corruptions, and clogged with an animal body, senses, appetite, fancy, which are always calling for things inconvenient, if not unlawful, doth conclude it would not be good for it to be at its own finding, or caring, or carving; and duly eyeing that infinite Mind and Understanding, who, in a wonderful, unaccountable manner, orders all things, and all events, to the best and certain issue, is so mastered by, and indeed enamoured with the sense of it, that he renounces his own wisdom, and throws out his own clamorous will, and complies readily with the all-wise

God. This is truly to converse with the wisdom of God, when we do out of choice refer ourselves to it, and roll ourselves upon it. Every bare acknowledgment of divine wisdom is not a proper conversing with it; but when the same is wrought into the soul, and the lively sense of it doth so overpower the heart, that the will is prepared to close readily with such methods as God shall please to use to accomplish his own ends, then do we properly and feelingly converse with God, under the notion of the all-wise God. But this of self-resignation I spoke something to under the first head, and much of that which is spoken there may be indifferently applied hither. Therefore,

7thly, CONVERSE with the unbounded Goodness, Love, and Mercy of God. God is infinitely and unchangeably loving and merciful to his people: he is good, saith the Psalmist, and he is love, saith the apostle, 1 Joh. iv. 8. Those dreadful and terrifying apprehensions which men have of the blessed and good God, as if he were some austere and surly majesty, given to passion and revenge, are apt to destroy that chearful and ingenuous converse with him, which the creature should maintain with its Creator at all times. But then we are most prone to entertain those apprehensions, and to harbour such unseemly notions of him, when he appears in the way of his judgments, when we take a

view of him in the ruins of our comforts, the blood of our friends, the spoil of our goods, and in the distresses of our lives. We are apt to frame notions of God according to what we find in our own disposition, to fancy a God like unto ourselves; and therefore we cannot eye an afflicting God, but we presently conclude an angry God; as though the eternal and pure Being were subject to passions and changes as we are. These apprehensions being once drunk into the soul, it becomes unhinged presently, and almost afraid to behold the face of Love itself, but flies and hides itself, as Adam in the garden: or if the soul do converse with God at all, it is as a city that is besieged converses with the enemy without, *viz.* sending out to seek peace, and to obtain a cessation of arms. And so a soul may bestow much upon God, surrender up the castle, give him all that he hath almost, not for any love that he bears to him, but as Joash gave Hazael a present of gold and precious things, to hire him to depart from him, 2 Kings xii. 18. Oh! then they will up and do any thing, yea, circumcise their lives, as Zipporah circumcised her son, Exod. iv. 25. to escape the hands of an angry God. Every one will converse with God as an enemy in time of extremity, hang out a flag for peace, send presents, pay homage, send ambassadors to entreat his face; but few know how to converse with

the goodness and mercy of God, with him as their dear and only friend in a time of affliction, freely and chearfully. Now there seems to be a double account to be given of nien's not conversing with the goodness and mercy of God in the time of afflictions.

I. "MANY cannot believe the mercy and kindness of God, when he is in the way of his judgments." If it be so, why am I thus? cries the poor soul, struggling under its burden, and travelling in pangs to be delivered of its griefs. Thus unbelievingly argues Gideon, who was otherwise famous for faith, in the time of his bitter bondage under the Midianites, Judg. vi. 13. when an angel from heaven was sent to assure him of the good-will of God towards him, he could not entertain the news, nor believe the report, because of the anguish of his soul, but cries out, "Oh, my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why is all this evil befallen us?" No, the LORD hath forsaken us, for he hath delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. The sad soul is ready to cry concerning CHRIST's gracious presence, as the two sisters concerning his personal presence, John xi. 21. 32. "LORD, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died:" LORD, if thou hadst been here, if thou hadst loved me, if thou hadst any delight in me, my brother had not died, my husband, my wife, my children had not

died; I had not been thus plagued, afflicted, wounded, tormented, as I am. Hence we have those many complaints of the afflicted soul up and down the psalms, "Hath the LORD forgot-
 " ten to be gracious? is his mercy clean gone?
 " hath he shut up his tender mercies in anger?" and many such like. The smart of our senses is apt to pervert the judgment of our minds, and the sense of bodily evils is ready to destroy all sense of the infinite and unchangeable goodness and love of God. Now, this great evil seems to arise from these two causes, *viz.* our measuring of God and his divine dispositions by ourselves and human passions and affections, as I hinted before; and our measuring the love of God too much by the proportion that he gives us of worldly prosperity. Wo to him in a day of distress, who was wont to judge of divine love by the things that are before him, as Solomon calls the things of this world, Eccl. ix. 1. This, I say, is the temper, the infirmity of many in the time of afflictions, though indeed there be no reason for it: for why should we conclude harshly concerning Job upon the dunghill, any more than we would conclude charitably concerning Ahab on the throne? Besides, the Scripture teaches expressly, that the love of God doth stand with correction, Psal. lxxxix. 33. "I will visit his iniquity, but
 " my loving-kindness will I not take from him."

Nay, it seems as if it could not well stand without it, Heb. xii. 6. "Whom the LORD loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

2. OTHERS do indeed believe the goodness and mercy of God to them in a time of affliction; "but either they cannot, or dare not, or will not converse with it, nor take comfort in it." They remember God with the Psalmist, Psal. lxxvii. 3. *i. e.* the goodness, bounty, mercy of God, saith Mollerus, and yet at the same time are troubled; their hearts are unquiet, fluctuating, tumultuous within them: the soul is so impressed with the sense of sin, which it hath contracted from the consideration of its sufferings, that it dare not presume to meddle with mercy; but though this mercy of God be its own, yet it is ready to think that it is a duty to forsake its own mercies, as tho' it heard God chiding it in the words of Jehu to Joram's scout, 2 Kings ix. 18. "What hast thou to do with peace?" what hast thou to do with mercy? "turn ye behind me." An afflicted soul hath much ado to believe it to be a duty to converse with the goodness and love of God in a time of affliction. It easily agrees to converse with the justice, holiness, and power of God indeed, but thinks it very improper and unseasonable, if not unsafe, to converse with his mercy. It is ready to cry, with Solomon,

presently, "In the day of prosperity rejoice, " but in the day of adversity consider;" or with the apostle, "If any be afflicted, let him pray; if he be merry, let him sing psalms." Conversing with the goodness of God seems not to be a duty at this season. I confess this is a high and hard duty. Every smatterer in religion will cry out in his affliction, "Thou art just and righteous, O LORD:" but, "Thou art good and merciful; blessed be the name of the LORD," is the voice of a Job only, chap. i. 21. But it is a duty, though a hard one, and affording much pleasure and contentment to them that are exercised therein. That the kindness and benignity of God doth not fail, that his love is not broken off from his people, no, nor suspended neither, when he afflicts them most, is most certain: for though he works changes in and upon us, yet himself is eternally and unchangeably the same, Jer. i. 17. and though some of his dealings towards his people seem to be rough and severe, yet, if we judge rightly of them, they are all mercy and truth towards them that keep his covenant, Psal. xxv. 10. And that the people of God ought to converse with this divine love and mercy, even in their greatest afflictions, is as clear. To this purpose I might alledge the fore-quoted example of holy Job, and might enforce this doctrine from the apostle's words, Philip. iv. 4.

and James i. 2. "Count it all joy when ye fall
"into divers temptations;" and from many
good reasons too, if it were needful. I know
indeed that it is a hard thing to keep up a right
frame towards, and converse rightly with the
righteousness and goodness of God at the same
time; the one frame is ready to juggle out the
other. Sorrow is apt to contract the heart, and
destroy the large and chearful temper of it;
and joy dilates and enlarges it, and is ready to
make it forget its grief. But though it be
hard, yet it is possible: these two may well con-
sist in the same soul, according to that in Psal.
ii. 11.—"Rejoice with trembling."

BUT how must we converse with the love and
mercy of God in the time of afflictions? I have
partly prevented myself in this already, but I
shall speak a little more distinctly of it. We
do not then converse with the goodness and
mercy of God, when we barely think of it, or
acknowledge it; but,

I. "WHEN we believe and apply it, and
"take to ourselves the comforts of it;" when
we look through the clouds that are round
about us, and quite cover us, and by the eye of
faith behold the Fountain and Father of light:
when we can look beyond the frowns that are
in his face, and the rod that is in his hand, and
see the good-will that dwells in the heart of
God towards us: More especially,

2. WHEN we do not only see and believe it, but also “draw virtue and influences down “from it into our souls, to establish, settle, and “satisfy them.” Not so much when we see it, as when we taste it; when we feel the Sun of righteousness warm us, though it does not dazzle us, and though we cannot perceive it to shine upon us, yet we find it to shine in us. We do then converse with the love and mercy of God in an afflicted state, when the same doth bear us up, not only from utter sinking, but even from inordinate sorrowing; when we draw a virtue from it into our souls to sustain them, yea, and to cherish them too. Thus Job comforts himself in his living REDEEMER, chap. xix. 25. and the Psalmist in the mercy of God, even when he was ready to slip, Ps. xciv. 18. 19. “In the multitude of my thoughts within me, “thy comforts delight my soul.” In a word, we converse with divine goodness when we are really warmed with it, and with almighty love, when we rejoice in it, and can with holy venturousness, and humble confidence, throw ourselves into the very bosom of it; when we receive impressions of it from the Spirit of God, and are thereby moulded into a temper suitable to it, and becoming it: for then indeed do we most happily converse with the love and goodness of God, when we for our part do live upon it; when we, being assured of an interest

in a loving and good God, do render up ourselves also unto him, in the most beautiful and becoming affections of love, joy, confidence, and holy delight. This is an excellent frame; and sure I am it is much for our interest thus to converse with God in the time of our afflictions. It is a high way of glorifying God, and bringing much credit to religion: and indeed he who keeps up this frame can be afflicted but in part: he escapes the greater half of the evil: for though it be never so stormy a time without him, a storm upon his house, upon his goods, upon his relations, yea, upon his own body, yet it is a calm day within, in the soul there is peace and tranquillity.

LASTLY, and indeed everlastingly too, we are to converse with the infinite self-sufficient Fulness of God, in a day of the greatest extremity: that is, as if I should say, not with any one single attribute, but with the very Godhead of God, the immense Perfection of God, the Allness of the DEITY. Oh! how seasonably doth this blessed object present itself to the soul in a time of afflictions, losses, mortalities, persecutions, when we are most emptied of creature enjoyments, and the emptiness of them doth most appear! for upon these two doth our conversing with God much depend. I need not tell you how apt we are to live beside God, when we have our fill of creature delights:

2. WHEN we do not only see and believe it, but also “draw virtue and influences down
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 “satisfy them.” Not so much when we see it, as when we taste it; when we feel the Sun of righteousness warm us, though it does not dazzle us, and though we cannot perceive it to shine upon us, yet we find it to shine in us. We do then converse with the love and mercy of God in an afflicted state, when the same doth bear us up, not only from utter sinking, but even from inordinate sorrowing; when we draw a virtue from it into our souls to sustain them, yea, and to cherish them too. Thus Job comforts himself in his living REDEEMER, chap. xix. 25. and the Psalmist in the mercy of God, even when he was ready to slip, Ps. xciv. 18. 19. “In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.” In a word, we converse with divine goodness when we are really warmed with it, and with almighty love, when we rejoice in it, and can with holy venturousness, and humble confidence, throw ourselves into the very bosom of it; when we receive impressions of it from the Spirit of God, and are thereby moulded into a temper suitable to it, and becoming it: for then indeed do we most happily converse with the love and goodness of God, when we for our part do live upon it; when we, being assured of an interest

in a loving and good God, do render up ourselves also unto him, in the most beautiful and becoming affections of love, joy, confidence, and holy delight. This is an excellent frame; and sure I am it is much for our interest thus to converse with God in the time of our afflictions. It is a high way of glorifying God, and bringing much credit to religion: and indeed he who keeps up this frame can be afflicted but in part: he escapes the greater half of the evil: for though it be never so stormy a time without him, a storm upon his house, upon his goods, upon his relations, yea, upon his own body, yet it is a calm day within, in the soul there is peace and tranquillity.

LASTLY, and indeed everlastingly too, we are to converse with the infinite self-sufficient Fulness of God, in a day of the greatest extremity: that is, as if I should say, not with any one single attribute, but with the very Godhead of God, the immense Perfection of God, the Allness of the DEITY. Oh! how seasonably doth this blessed object present itself to the soul in a time of afflictions, losses, mortalities, persecutions, when we are most emptied of creature enjoyments, and the emptiness of them doth most appear! for upon these two doth our conversing with God much depend. I need not tell you how apt we are to live beside God, when we have our fill of creature delights:

whilst we can entertain our hearts with a created sweetness, we foolishly forget and neglect the supreme Good. And so fond and unreasonable is this affection, that no warnings, no precepts will serve the turn; God is forced to break that off from us, from which we would not be broken. Sure I am, the blessed and bountiful God envies not his servants any of their creature comforts or delights; but he loves them, as I said before, with a strong and powerful love, and will not suffer them to live so much to their losses as they do, when they spend noble affections upon transitory things, in the everlasting enjoyment of which they could never be happy. Now, afflictions are a negative, if we speak properly, even as sin is: and, whenever we are afflicted in any kind, we are emptied of some created good; as poverty is nothing but the absence of riches, sickness the want of ease, of order, of health in the constitution, restraint is the loss of liberty, &c. So then it appears, that in a time of affliction God is emptying us of creature enjoyment: for indeed affliction itself is little or nothing else but such an emptying or deprivation: and that then the emptiness of the creature doth most appear, I suppose all will grant. The sick person looks upon his decayed strength, and withering members, and is feelingly convinced of the truth of the Scripture, “—All flesh is grass.”

Another casts about his eyes with Samson, and sees heaps upon heaps, and cries out like one that feels the weight of his own words, "Child-hood and youth are vanity:" or, Alas! how soon is the desire of one's eyes taken away with a stroke! Another sees his goods carried away before his face, and his house on fire before his eyes, and then cries out, that he hath a real proof of the vanity of those things, which Solomon had long ago observed, Prov. xxiii. 5. "Riches make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle towards heaven." Whilst we see the creatures stand, we will not believe but they are stable; whilst we see them fair and flourishing, we cannot rightly lay to heart the withering nature of them; but when we see them cut down, we then conclude they were but flowers; when we see them flitting, we conclude they are shadows; when God pours them out upon the ground, we are then convinced that they were unstable as water: to shew us what the best of our creature enjoyments are, God is forced to take them quite away, that they may be no more.

Now then, in such a case, at such a time, converse with the infinite self-sufficient Fulness of God. Oh! now it is seasonable, now it is your duty, nay, now it will be your greatest policy. If that channel, that creature channel be stopt, in which your affections were wont

to run too freely, turn the stream of them into their proper channel in which they may run freely, and neither ever meet with obstruction, nor ever overflow. Let your soul grow up into acquaintance and union with God by creature-breaches and disappointments. More particularly, converse with the self-sufficient Fulness of God,

1. BY the act of creature-denial. The eyeing of an infinite, absolute, uncreated Fulness in a right manner, takes off the soul from all created objects, earthly things; even as the beholding the sun in its glory dazzles the eye to all things below. God becomes so great in the eye of the soul, that it cannot see the poor motes of worldly comforts. Give a soul a feeling taste of the infinite sweetness and fulness of the fountain, and its thirst after the poor puddles of the world is presently abated, if not perfectly quenched, according to that of our SAVIOUR, John iv. 14. "Whosoever shall drink
" of the water that I shall give him, shall never
" thirst;" *i. e.* not after any other thing. Like unto which is that gospel promise, Isa. xlix. 10.
" They shall not thirst," who do enjoy these springs of water. When this fountain is opened in the eye of the soul, and the soul begins to taste of it, it longs to drink deeper of that indeed; but as for all other waters, waters of the cistern, the soul looks upon them as no

being, or at least as being bitter, waters of Marah in comparison, We do then truly converse with the infinite self-sufficient fulness of God, when we look upon all created good with a noble disdain, are content to part with it; or if we do still enjoy it, are resolved to enjoy it only in God, and so look upon it, and love it, only as a beam from the Father of lights, as a drop of the infinite Fountain of all perfections. Tell me, is it not a poor and low thing that many professors do, who acknowledge and magnify the uncreated goodness, the fulness of God, and yet at the same time do covet and court the creature with all eagerness, and their worldliness is apparently too hard for their religion? Methinks I hear God speaking to such seeming friends as Delilah to Samson, Judg. xvi. 15. "How canst thou say, I love thee, when thy heart is not with me?" To these men's hearts, methinks our SAVIOUR's doctrine should strike cold, Matth. vi. 21, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also:" And those words of his beloved apostle, 1 John ii. 15. "If any man love the world, the love of the FATHER is not in him." Let a man pretend and profess what he will, and in words magnify the fulness and sufficiency of God as much as he will, if in the mean time his soul be bound up in the creature, such a man's religion is vain; nay, indeed his profession of

God becomes a real reproaching of him, and a blasphemy against reason itself. Let your low esteem of all created good in comparison of the supreme Good, your readiness to quit your title to every creature-comfort, and in the mean time your care to live beside it, witness the true and honourable esteem, the true and feeling sense that you have in your hearts of the infinite and self-sufficient fulness of God: for however men may make a shift to cheat themselves, God is not truly great in the soul till all other things become as nothing; neither doth the soul rightly converse with his infinite Fulness, so long as any thing stands in opposition to it, or competition with it.

2. CONVERSE with the self-sufficient Fulness of God by the grace of faith, I mean by that act of it, whereby we do interest ourselves, and as it were wrap up our own souls in this fulness, and make it our own. And herein there is no danger of an humble soul's being too bold or venturous; for the proclamation is full, and the invitation free, Isa. lv. 1. John vii. 37. Rev. xxii. 17. "Whoſoever will, let him take the "water of life freely." What Seneca ſays of the ſoul in regard of the divine original of it, may ſure be better ſaid of a godly ſoul in reſpect of the divine nature and qualities of it, "*Illum divina delectant, nec ut alienis intereſt, ſed ut ſuis*; it doth not converse with things

“divine, as with another’s, but as its own.” And indeed we cannot truly and comfortably converse with the infinite perfection and fulness of God, if we have no title to it ; but then we converse with God, when we converse with our own God, not another’s ; when the soul is able to say, All the fulness of Power, Wisdom, Goodness, is all mine in my head CHRIST JESUS, for in him all this fulness dwells, Col. ii. 9. and he dwelleth in me ; in him are hid all these treasures, Col. ii. 3. and “ my life also is hid with “ CHRIST in God,” as theirs was in Col. iii. 3. You see then that a soul cannot converse with the infinite fulness and self-sufficiency of God, but by CHRIST ; for it is in and by him that we receive of divine fulness, John i. 16. Hence was that of the devout father, *Tolle meum, tolle Deum* ; to which I may add, *Tolle Jesum, et tollis meum*. The fulness of a fountain is nothing to me, except it be mine, There is bread enough in my father’s house, says the poor prodigal, but for all that I perish with hunger : so is there living waters evermore in this uncreated Life, this infinite spring of all Perfection ; yet many souls are choaked with thirst, because the Fountain is not theirs ; it is a fountain sealed, as Solomon speaks in another case. “ The well is “ deep,” and they “ have nothing to draw “ with,” as the woman said concerning another well, John iv. Therefore be sure you get an

interest in the fulness and sufficiency of God, or, as Solomon speaks in another case, Prov. v. 15. "Drink waters out of thine own well."

3. CONVERSE with the self-sufficient Fulness of God, by delighting yourselves in it. Drink of this fountain, yea, drink abundantly, ye beloved of God, Cant. v. 1. yea, ly down by it, Psal. xxiii. 2. yea, bathe yourselves wholly in it; "Enter into the joy of your LORD," ly down in his bosom, spread yourselves in his love and fulness. The beloved disciple leaning upon the breast of his LORD at supper, was but a dark shadow, a poor scant resemblance of a beloved soul, which, by the lovely acts of joy, confidence, and delight, lays itself down in the bosom of JESUS, and doth not feed with him, but feed upon him, and his all-sufficiency. Then do we converse indeed feelingly and comfortably with the infinite fulness, when the soul is swallowed up in it, doth rest in it, is filled with it, and centered upon it. Oh the noble and free-born spirit of true religion, that disdain- ing the pursuit of low and created things, is carried out with delight to feed and dwell, and live upon uncreated Fulness! Then is a soul raised to its just altitude, to the very height of its being, when it can spend all its powers upon the supreme and self-sufficient Good, spreading and stretching itself upon God with full contentment, and wrapping up itself entirely

in him. This is the soul's way of living above losses; and he that so lives, though he may often be a loser, yet shall never be at a loss. He who feeds upon created goodness or sweetness, may soon eat himself out of all; the stock will be spent, and, which is worse, the soul will be dried up, that hath nothing else to nourish it. But he who lives upon uncreated Fulness is never at a loss, though he lose never so much of the creature: for who will value the spilling of a dish of water, who hath a well of living water at his door, from whence he had that, and can have more as good, though not the same. Nay, to speak properly, this is the only way to lose nothing: for how can he be properly said to lose any thing who possesses all things? And so doth he, I am sure, who is filled with the fulness of God. Be sure therefore, that in the want, in the loss of all things, you live upon the fountain-fulness, delight yourself in the LORD, after the example of the prophet Habakkuk, chap. iii. 17. 18.

I HAVE gone through the doctrinal part of my discourse upon these words, which was the thing I mainly intended. Many inferences might be drawn from it; but I shall content myself to forbid, and so, as it were, to remove out of the way some things that hinder this great duty, and so shut up all with one word of exhortation.

I. "CONVERSE not with creature-comforts," the poor, low, and scant enjoyments of this world, for so I may well call them. Though they be never so high in the opinion of them who have them, and never so large as to the proportion that any one hath of them, they are low in comparison of that high and supreme Good for which the soul was made, and scant as to any real happiness or satisfaction that they can possibly give; for indeed those sinful and sensual souls that take up their rest and happiness most in them, are not properly satisfied, but surfeited; not filled, but for the present glutted with them. There are many unlawful and hurtful ways of the soul's conversing with created comforts; I will not run through them all, as not intending any large discourse upon these heads. Converse not with them, fondly delighting in them, and doating upon them; especially take heed of this when God is shaking his rod over any of them. Doth God arise and begin to plead with you in judgment, laying his hand upon any of these, and threatening to take them from you? Oh then, hands off! touch them not. What an unseemly and indeed monstrous sight is it to see a creature pulling and tugging against his Creator, and maintaining his supposed right against heaven itself! Is it for a heaven-born soul to stand gazing and doating upon, or passionately weep-

ing over created friends, carnal liberty, corporal health, houses made with hands, things below God, yea, and below itself too? Pore not too much upon them, value them only in God, and refer them freely to him. If you can say you have any thing of your own, make much of it, and spare not ; but give unto God the things that are God's ; and by that time you have done so, I think you need not doat upon what is left. We ought indeed at all times to enjoy all our creature-comforts with hearts loosed from them ; but if formerly our hearts have been too much joined to them, it is now time to loosen them.

2. " CONVERSE not with creature-causes in " a time of affliction." This is a strange kind of atheistical temper, into which we are very prone to fall. I speak properly when I say fall ; for it is indeed a falling down from God in our hearts, in whose infinite Essence all creature-causes are lapt up, and in whose hand the several successes and events of them all do ly. Let a beast, that judges by sense, kick at the poor thorn that pricks him ; but let rational souls fix upon the highest and supreme Agent, who, in an infinite, powerful, and skilful manner, uses what creature he will, for what end he will, and sends it of an errand which itself knows not. Why do we run hunting poor partridge-instruments upon the mountains of con-

temptation? shall the noble faculties of an immortal soul spend themselves upon such an inquisition? or is it just to pursue an innocent creature out of breath, for being an instrument in the hand of God; to quarrel with the sword, because it suffered itself to be drawn; or beat the air, because it is infected? This were indeed to go out with the king of Israel, with much warlike preparation, to catch fleas. I deny not but that wise men may look into second causes, and make many profitable observations from them, both for present and future, and all men may and ought to learn many wholesome lessons even from the instrument that afflicts them. But sure I am, a godly man will not dwell upon these; he will not fix here, but readily resolve all into an higher cause, and so falls to converse with that; much less will he blame or murmur at a poor harmless arrow, that flew no further than it was shot, and pierced no deeper than it was bidden. Yea, though the second cause were a sinful cause, a rational agent, and so consequently acted by malicious and evil principles, yet a godly soul knows how to distinguish upon him and his action: he hates him as a sinner, but comports well enough with him as God's instrument; and though he condemns his action as it varies from God's command, yet he approves of it as being ordered by God's hand and counsel.

David hated cursing as much as any man; yet did he so eye the hand of God in every thing, and comply with it too, that there was a time when he said concerning Shimei, "So let him curse." Concerning this I hinted something before under another head: Therefore,

3. "CONVERSE not with creature-cures, creature-relief." These may indeed be looked out after, and safely made use of when they are found: nay, I will add further, that they are to be sought diligently, and used carefully. Those who know the infinite sovereignty, power, and wisdom of God, will not tie him to means, much less to those or these particular means: but, on the other hand, they that understand God's usual and ordinate way of acting, governing, and upholding the world, will not tie him up from means; no, nor expect that he should appear for their relief immediately and miraculously: though if any one have a miraculous faith, truly grounded upon some special and particular promise, I will not contend with him; only I would desire to see his miraculous faith justified by some miraculous works, which I conceive do always attend it. But the converse with creature-cures, which I forbid, is the immoderate seeking of them, or the inordinate using of them. To seek after means in themselves unlawful, can never become lawful: but I speak not of these. For although some are

come to that height of atheism and abjuration of God, as to retain the devil himself for a counsel in a time of straits, as Saul did, and contract with the prince of death for the preservation of life in time of sickness, as Ahaziah did; and I doubt very many do fall into acquaintance with that evil spirit, and receive assistance from him before they be well aware, by meddling with unphysical, unscriptural, unwarrantable cures; yet the greatest danger is not in these; *in licitis perimus omnes*; the greatest danger is of miscarrying about things in themselves lawful, and that is chiefly by those two ways which I named but now. Take heed therefore of immoderate seeking after created helps; be not anxious, perplexed, tormented in mind by a passionate desire of any of these. Oh what a raging and unquenchable thirst have many men after creature-cures! they will move heaven and earth, and almost hell too, (with her in the poet), but they will find out relief. Give me a physician, or I die, says one; give me trading, good markets, a plentiful crop, or I am undone, says another. What, man! is thy life lapt up in a pill, or incorporated into a potion? is thy main happiness in the abundance of these things here below? or wilt thou say to the wind, blow here in this quarter, and no where else; tie up the supreme and free Agent to a form and method of working? Let not such

a profane disposition be found amongst us. Again, if you have found out hopeful creature-cures, take heed of using them in an inordinate manner, laying stress upon them, looking earnestly on them, as though they by their own power and proper virtue could make the lame to walk, or the sick to recover. Eye not, much less depend upon the virtue of any created means, as distinct from God ; but acknowledge the power, and virtue, and goodness of every created being, to be the power, and virtue, and goodness of God in that creature ; and so consequently use it in subordination and suberviency to the supreme Cause, who can at pleasure let loose or suspend the influences and virtues of every such means.

4. "CONVERSE not with creature-losses in a time of affliction." The sinful soul that hath straggled off from God, and centred upon the creature, is always intemperate and restless : if it be disappointed in its converse with creature-cures, and sees that for all these his comforts are cut off, health, liberty, friends, are perished ; then he falls to converse with his losses, and spends the powers of his soul in discontents, and many dismal passions. Oh then ! alas ! I am undone ! " What shall I do for the hundred talents ? I am the only man that hath seen affliction : no sorrow like unto my sorrow : " I shall go softly all my days, for the joy of my

heart is perished, the delight of mine eyes is cut off. Thus Rachel weeps for her children, and will not be comforted; Rizpah attends the carcases of her sons, and will not be parted from them, 2 Sam. xxi. 10. It is a strange thing that a soul should live upon its losses, and yet how many do so? Their very soul cleaves to the dust, where their creature-comforts are interred; whose souls are so much bound up in the creature, that they will needs live and die together with them. If God smites the gourd, and make it to wither, Jonah droops, and will needs die too, Jonah iv. 8. 9. If Joseph be missing a while, Jacob will not be comforted; no, he will go down into the grave unto his son mourning, Gen. xxxvii. 35. Who would have thought to have heard such words from such wise men, as a prophet and a patriarch? Oh the strange and unbounded power which this unseemly creature-love hath obtained over the best of men! which makes me call him a happy man, almost more than a man, a compeer of angels, who hath learned to converse with God alone. Well, converse not with creature-losses; let not your soul take up its lodging by the carcases of your created comforts, with Rizpah; dwell not upon the lowest round of the ladder, but climb up by it to the meaning of God, and to some higher good, and more excellent attainment. They live to their loss who live upon

their losses, who dwell upon the dark side of the dispensation; for every dark providence hath one bright side, wherein a godly soul may take comfort, if he be not wanting to himself.

5. "CONVERSE not with flesh and blood." By flesh and blood I suppose the apostle means no more than men, Gal. i. 16. And indeed, if we confer with men only for counsel, and repair to men only for comfort in a time of affliction, we shoot short of the mark. But by flesh and blood the scripture elsewhere often means man in this his animal state, as he is in his corruptible, mortal body, as 1 Cor. xv. 50. and many other places. And in this sense I speak, when I say, converse not with flesh and blood. Judge not according to your senses; let not your own sensual appetite determine what is good or evil, sweet or bitter: consult with rectified reason, and not with brutish appetite; confer with faith, and not with fancy. Rectified reason will judge that to be really good which our sensual appetite distates; an enlightened mind will judge that to make for the interest of the soul, and its eternal happy state, which sense judges hurtful to the interest of the body and its animal state. 'Tis not possible there should be any order, nor consequently any peace or rest in that soul, where the inferior faculties domineer over the superior, and sensitive powers lord it over the intellectual.

and where raging appetite and extravagant fancy must clamber up into the throne to determine cases, and right reason must stoop and bow before it.

BE admonished to fly converse with all these, if you would converse rightly, purely, properly, comfortably with God, which is the highest office and attainment of created nature. Consider what I have said concerning this excellent and high employment, and awaken your souls, and all the powers of them, to meet the LORD God, and converse with him aright in the way of his judgments. Converse with God, with God in CHRIST, with God in his promises, with God in his attributes; and labour to do it, not speculatively, notionally, but really, practically, according as I have directed in the foregoing discourse. Religion is not an empty, airy, notional thing; it is not a matter of thinking, nor of talking, but it hath a real existence in the soul, and doth as really distinguish, though not specifically, one man from another, as reason distinguishes all men from beasts. Converse with God is set out in scripture by living and walking, and the like. Let me inculcate this thing therefore again, and press it upon you, and I shall finish all. As the way of glorifying God in the world is not by a mere thinking of him, or entertaining some notion of his glory into our heads, but consists in a real participa-

tion of his image, in a God-like disposition, and holy conversation, according to that of our SAVIOUR, John xv. 8. "Herein is my Father glorified," &c. so the way of conversing with God in his several attributes is not a thinking often with ourselves, and telling one another that God is just, wise, and merciful, &c. though this be good ; but it is a drinking in the virtue and value of these divine perfections, a working of them into the soul ; and, on the other hand, the soul's rendering of itself up to God in those acts of grace which suit with such attributes, as in water face answereth face. I do not call bare performance of duties a conversing with God : prayer and meditation, &c. are excellent means, in and by which our soul converses with God ; but communion with God is properly somewhat more spiritual, real, powerful, and divine, according as I described it just now. As for example, the soul receives the impressions of divine sovereignty into it, and gives up itself unto God in the grace of self-denial, and humble subjection : the soul receives the communications of divine Fulness and Perfection, and entertains the same with delight and complacency, and, as it were, grows full in it ; even as the communications of the virtues of the sun are answered with life, and warmth, and growth in the plants of the earth. So a soul's conversing with the attributes of God is

not an empty notion of them, or a dry discourse concerning them, but a reception of impressions from them, and a reciprocation to them : the effluxes of these from God are such as do beget reflections in man towards God. This is to know CHRIST, to grow up in him unto all things, according to that in 1 John iii. 6. " Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him."

A
F A R E W E L L
T O
L I F E.

2 COR. V. 6.

— *Ἐνδημῶντες ἐν τῷ σώματι, ἐκδημῶμεν ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου.*

—WHILST WE ARE AT HOME IN THE BODY,
WE ARE ABSENT FROM THE LORD.

THE holy apostle having, in the first verse of this chapter, laid down the doctrine of eternal glory, which shall follow upon this transitory state of believers, shews in the following verses how he himself longed within himself, and groaned after that happy state; and then proceeds to give a double ground of this his confident expectation. The one is in v. 5. where the apostle is confident concerning the putting off of this mortal body, because God had wrought and formed him for this state of glory, and already given him an earnest of it, even his HOLY SPIRIT: the other ground of

the confidence and settledness of his mind as to his desires of a change, is taken from his present state in the body, which was but poor and uncomfortable in comparison of that glorious state held forth in the words of the text, "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the LORD." For I do not take the words, "we are confident," concerning the apostle's resolvedness, with a quiet and sober mind, to suffer any kind of persecution or affliction whatever; but "we are always confident," *i. e.* we do with confidence expect, or at least we are always well satisfied, contented, well resolved in our minds, concerning our departure out of this life: for the apostle was speaking, not of afflictions or persecutions in the former verses, but indeed of death, which he calls a dissolving of the earthly house of this tabernacle, *v* 1. and a being clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, *v* 2. 4. Yea, and thus the apostle explains himself, *v* 8. where he tells you what he means by this his confidence, "We are confident, and willing rather to be absent from the body;" where the latter words are exgetical to the former: *q. d.* It is better to be with the LORD than in this mortal body; but we cannot be with the LORD whilst we are in this body, it keeps us from him; therefore we

have the confidence to part with it. It is the reason of the apostle's confidence and willingness to part with the body that I am to speak of; and the reason is, because this body keeps him from his LORD, "—whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the LORD." The words are a metaphor, and are to be translated thus, "We indwelling in the body, do dwell out from the LORD;" which our translation renders well, taking little notice of the metaphor, "whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the LORD;" though indeed, if they had left out that word *at home*, it would have been as well, and so have neglected the metaphor altogether, as we may haply hint hereafter. The words are a reason of the apostle's willingness to be dissolved, and contain a kind of an accusation of the body, and so seem to lay a blame upon it, and upon this animal life, which must be remembered. Now, for the former phrase of being "at home in the body," it is easily understood, and generally, I think, agreed upon, to be no more than whilst we carry about with us this corruptible flesh, whilst we live this natural animal life: it only signifies man in his compounded animal state, *ἄνθρωπος ὁ σαρικός*, and doth not at all allude to his sinful, unregenerate, or carnal state: but the latter phrase, "absent from the LORD," is capable of a double sense, both good and true,

and I think both fit enough to the context and drift of the apostle. I shall speak to both, but insist most upon the latter.

I. "WHILST we are in the body we are absent from the LORD," *i. e.* from the bodily presence of the LORD in heaven, absent from CHRIST JESUS and his glory; and so the words are the same in sense with 1 Cor. xv. 50. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God:" for by flesh and blood there must needs be meant man in this animal corruptible state. And so the apostle accuses this kind of life in the body, and as it were blames it for standing between him and his glorified LORD, and so, consequently, between him and the glory of his LORD. And this sense doth well agree with what went before, and with what follows. The apostle hath a great mind to depart, for whilst he is in the body, he is absent from his perfect happiness; for this is the consummation of a Christian's happiness, to be with the LORD, to be admitted to a beholding of his infinite glory, as appears by our SAVIOUR's earnest prayer for this, John xvii. 24. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." Besides, if we shall see him as he is, we must also needs be made like unto him, 1 John iii. 2. else how can we be fit to live for ever in his presence? Now are we kept

from this seeing and beholding of the LORD in glory by this animal life ; it stands between us and the crown, between us and our Master's joy, between us and the perfect enjoyment of God. To be with the LORD is a state of perfect freedom from sin. No unclean thing shall or can enter into heaven, Rev. xxi. 27. A perfect freedom from all manner of afflictions, Rev. xxi. 4. " There shall be no more sorrow, nor crying, nor pain, and ἀδάκρυτον, νεῖμενται αἰῶνα, " all tears shall be wiped away from their eyes." A state of freedom from all temptations to sin ; for a tempting devil, and all tempting lusts, shall be cast out for ever : a state of perfect peace, without the least disturbance from within, or from without ; of perfect joy, that shall never have end or abatement ; and of perfect holiness, when the whole soul shall be enlarged, and raised to know, and love, and enjoy the blessed God, as much as created nature is capable. This is the happy state of seeing God, of being with the LORD ; and it is our corruptible body, this animal life, that interposes between us and it ; so that the apostle is confident, and rather willing to depart and be with the LORD, than stay here and be without him.

2. " WHILST we are at home in the body, " we are absent from the LORD," without any reference to the world to come ; and so it may be fitly translated, " distant from the LORD,

“estranged from God.” This agrees well with the context, and scope of the apostle also. And thus the words are also a good ground of the apostle’s resolution and willingness to die; *q. d.* I am willing to be absent from this body, for whilst I am in it I find myself to be at a great distance from God. And indeed the word *ἐξέναντι* signifies properly to be at a distance, or to be estranged: so I find it interpreted by a learned critic, without any mystery, (as he speaks), of the distance that even believers themselves stand at from God in this life. And in this sense I shall chuse to prosecute the words. In which sense the apostle blames this body and animal life, because it keeps us at a distance from God; is a clog, a snare, a fetter, a pinion to the soul. And so the words do agree in sense with those of our SAVIOUR, Matth. xxvi. 41. “The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak:” where by the flesh must needs be understood the body, if we consider the context, *viz.* the occasion upon which the words were spoken, the sleepiness of the apostles; or if we consider the propriety of speech, according to the style of the New Testament. True indeed, the corruption of nature is sometimes called *flesh*; but according to that way of speaking, our SAVIOUR would rather have said, that the spirit was willing, but the flesh was strong; as he saith elsewhere, that the strong man armed kept the house.

Now, to explain this doctrine a little, "That even the godly themselves; whilst they are in this body, are at a distance from the LORD." It must be granted, that the godly soul is high unto God, even whilst it sojourns in this mortal body; and tottering flesh. All souls are involved in the apostasy of Adam, and are fallen down from God, have alike straggled from their God, and are sunk into self and the creature: God opened a way for their return by the blood of JESUS; for we owe it unto CHRIST's death, not only that God is reconciled to us, pardoning our sins, but that any of our natures become reconciled to God, by accepting of him as our God, and loving him as the chiefest Good. Now there is a double being brought nigh to God by CHRIST. The first is more general, external, and; as I may say, rational: thus the partition-wall being broken down, the Gentiles that were converted from their idolatry to a profession of God and CHRIST; and admitted to a communion with the visible church; are, upon that account, said to be brethren to the rest of God's children; 1 Cor. x. 11. and as to the church; they are said to be within it; * 12. though at the same time they were fornicators, covetous, drunkards; and as to God, they are said to be made nigh, Eph. ii. 13. A professing of God is said to be a being nigh to him; and even an external performance is said

to be a drawing nigh to him; and so Nadab and Abihu, even in the offering of strange fire, are said to have drawn nigh to God, Lev. x. 3. And this, though it be a privilege, yet is not that honourable privilege of the truly godly souls, who are by CHRIST JESUS raised up to God in their hearts, and reconciled to him in their natures, and united to him in their affections, and so are made nigh unto him in a more especial and spiritual manner. Thus all sinful and wicked souls, notwithstanding all their profession and performances, are far from God, estranged from the life of God. Enmity and dissimilitude are the most real distance from God, and truly God-like souls are only nigh unto him; they dwell in him, and he dwelleth in them, as in his most proper temple. As to any kind of apposition, no man can draw nigh to God, nor by any local accession, for so all men are alike nigh to him who is every where, and the worst as well as the best of men do live and move in him. But they are really nigh unto God who do enjoy him; and they only enjoy him, whose natures are conformable to him in a way of love, goodness, and God-like perfections. We do not enjoy God by any gross and external conjunction with him, but we enjoy him, and are nigh unto him, by an internal union; "when a divine Spirit informeth and acteth our souls, and derives a di-

“ yine life into them and through them.” And so a godly soul only is really and happily nigh unto God. Thus the apostle Paul, I believe, was as nigh unto God as any man in the world, who did not only live and move in God, as all men do, (though few understand it), but God did even live, and, as it were, breathe in him : the very life that he lived was “ by faith in the “ Son of God,” Gal. ii. 20. ; for though he walked in the flesh, yet he did not walk after the flesh, 2 Cor. x. 3. And yet this gracious soul, even as all other believers, was at a distance from God ; and that not so much by reason of his creatureship, for of that he doth not speak, (so the very angels of God are at an infinite distance from God), but by reason of this mortal body, and animal life, which hindered him from being so nigh to God as his soul was capable to be :—“ whilst we are in the “ body, we are absent from the LORD ;” *i. e.* at a great distance from God.

It, WE are distant from God “ as to that “ knowledge which we shall have of him.” Philosophical divines speak of a threefold knowledge, 1. *Kata natura*, an essential knowledge of God. This is that unspeakable light, whereby the divine Nature comprehends its own essence, wherein God seeth himself. 2. *Kat' epinoian*, by science. This man is capable of in this life. But this kind of knowing of God by way of

science is but a low and dry thing, common to good and bad, men and devils; and is indeed the perfection of the learned more than of the godly: "and this kind of knowledge of God the glorified soul will reckon but like a fable, or a parable, when it shall be once swallowed up in God, feasting upon Truth itself, and seeing God in the pure rays of his own divinity." 3. *Kata yonoiy*, or by intuition. This man cannot attain to in this life, in its perfection, because it arises from a blissful union with God himself, which in this animal state is imperfect. This, in the Platonic phrase, is *ἐκπῆσις τῷ νοῦ*, a contact of God, and, in scripture language, a beholding of God face to face, which we are not capable of in this animal concrete state. So may the answer of God to Moses be understood, when he besought God to shew him his glory, Exod. xxxiii. 18: *i. e.* to imprint a distinct idea of his divine Essence upon his mind, & 20. "No man can see me and live;" *i. e.* no man in this corruptible state and animal life is capable of seeing me as I am, to apprehend my divine Essence, to see my face. The vision of God is not in this life, but in the other; so that a man must die before he can thus know God. This is the exposition of Jewish doctors, and our learned countrymen do approve it also. This blessed knowledge of God we are at a distance from whilst we are in this

body : so the apostle declares plainly, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. " Now we see darkly, as through a " glass;" but the time will come when we shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known. Now our body principally hinders the operation of our minds, when they do exercise themselves about the nature of God, whilst it presents its fancies and gross imaginations to the soul ; so it becomes, as it were, a vail upon the face of the soul, draws a cloud, and casts a mist over its eyes, that it cannot discern distinctly, nor judge properly and spiritually. And with allusion to this, that passage of the apostle is proper and significant, " we see as through a glass," " which glass is indeed continually sullied " and darkened whilst we look into it, by the " breathing of our animal fancies and imaginations upon it." Not only those stinking fogs of pride and self-love, and other sinful corruptions, that do arise out of the soul itself, hinder our right perceptions of God ; (as the earth sends out vapours out of itself, which arise and interpose between itself and the sun) ; but even the animal fancy casts in its phantasms and imaginations as a mist before the eye of the soul, which through divine grace hath been somewhat enlightened, and cleared from its inbred sinful humours. Though corruption in the mind be as a rheum in its eye, so that it cannot well see, yet that doth not hinder but

that the fancy, by presenting its unspiritual imaginations, doth also cast a mist before it, that it cannot see well, nor judge rightly; and so it is either held in gross ignorance, or lapses into error. But in the regeneration, this sense either shall not be, or shall be pure and spiritual.

2dly, **WHILST** we are in the body, we are distant from God, "as to that service which we ought to perform to him in the world." And herein it were endless to run through all those outward duties which we owe unto God in the body, and to shew how the body becomes a hinderance either to them, or in them. Tho' the soul be made willing and forward, by a divine principle implanted in it, yet the body remains a body, a weak and sluggish instrument; and so it will be whilst it is animal, it will go down into the dust a weak body, 1 Cor. xv. 43. What man ever had a more willing and cheerful heart than Moses the friend of God? yet his hands were heavy, and ready to hang down, Exod. xvii. 12. Shall I instance in the excellent duty of preaching and hearing, wherein the spirits of the most spiritual preacher are soon exhausted, the tongue of the learned is ready to cleave to the roof of his mouth, the head is seized with dizziness, the heart with pantings, the organs of speech with weariness, and the knees with trembling? and the ears of

the most devout hearers with heaviness, the eyes with sleepiness, and the whole body in a short time with weakness? Shall I instance in the noble duty of prayer, wherein the pious soul goes out to God, but can scarce get its body to accompany it? and there the fancy distracts, the senses divert, and indeed all the members are ready to play the truants, if not the traitors too; especially the brain, where the soul sits enthroned, is suddenly environed with a rude rout of sluggish vapours arising from the stomach, and being no longer able to defend itself against them, falls down dead in the midst of them; insomuch that the poor soul is ready to wish sometimes with the sorrowful prophet, "Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place, that I might leave my members, and go from them, for they are all an assembly of treacherous servants;" or wish that it were like its Saviour, who could leave his raw disciples asleep, and go and pray apart, and come again unto them! Shall I instance in that high duty of sustaining martyrdom, bearing persecutions for God? Come on, my body, cries the holy soul, come on to the stake; come my head, lay down thyself upon this block; come my body, compose thyself in this dark dungeon; come my feet, fit yourselves into these stocks; come my hands, draw on these fetters, these iron bracelets; come, come drink the cup that

my Father gives thee. But oh how it follows to the stake! what shaking, shivering, trembling, and reluctance may you see in the whole structure of it! the head hangs down, the eyes run over, the lips quiver, the shoulders pull back, the hands tremble, the knees knock together, and the whole fabric is ready to tumble down, for fear of falling. Either to this (as some interpret) or to that duty of prayer (as others) doth that of our SAVIOUR refer, Mark xiv. 38. "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." It seems the spirit of the weakest Christian is strong, though the body (as we have seen) of the strongest saint is weak: though indeed it is not properly the weakness that is in the body that I am to speak to, but the influence that the body hath upon the soul to weaken that; for whilst the soul sympathizes with the body, attends to it, spares it, pities it, itself becomes almost ill affected to the service of God. I am not so much blaming the body, because it had need, by reason of its slothfulness, to be drawn on to duty, but because, by its influences, it draws on the soul also from them; for so we find it by woful experience, that if the body do sleep the soul cannot wake, it cannot hear without the ear, nor see without the eyes; so that the body's weariness at length ends in the soul's unwillingness, and the weakness of the one grows to be the sin of the other.

gdly, **WHILST** we are in the body we are at a distance from God, "as to communion with him;" we are estranged from fellowship with him: and this is indeed to be absent from the **LORD**. Oh! how many weary and uncomfortable days do poor saints live, at a great distance from their God, their life, their happiness, whilst they are in their worldly pilgrimage, in their cage of flesh! Oh! how many days do they forget God, and are apt to think that God hath forgotten them too! how do they live sometimes, as it were, without God in the world, their souls being surfeited with carnal pleasures, benumbed with fears, frozen with self-love, choaked with cares, stifled with griefs, and seem to have no more feeling of God, their life, than a body in the dust hath of the soul its life! Oh! what a heavy yoke doth the poor soul draw under, when it plows and harrows to the flesh, and cannot lift up its head to heaven! Oh! how is our intercourse with God obstructed, our beholding of him obscured, our entertaining of him prevented, our enjoyment of him disturbed and violated, our love to him deadened, and his love to us damped; ours rendered infirm, and his rendered insensible, and all by this make-bate mortal flesh! Alas! what uncertainties and vicissitudes, what changings and tossings, turnings and windings, are our poor pilgrim souls here exercised with! what breakings and

pieceings, reconciliations and fallings out, closing and parting, rising and falling, what ups and downs, what forwards and backwards, doth the poor distressed soul experience in this animal state! The flourishing soul withers, the lofty soul languishes, the vigorous soul faints, the nimble soul flags, the devout soul swoons, the lively soul sickens, and is ready to give up the ghost; and she that was a while ago resting and glorying in the arms of her LORD, anon lies embracing a dunghill, and hath almost forgotten that ever she was happy; her peace is violated, her rest is disturbed, her converse with heaven interrupted, her incomes from God are few and insensible, her outgoings to him are few and lazy, and the rivers of her divine pleasures are almost dried up; and all this whilst she is in this body; and indeed a great part of it by reason of this body in which she is; the animal body keeps us distant from the LORD, that we cannot converse with him, mind him, enjoy him, live upon him and unto him. The body being fitted only for this animal state, is ever drawing down the soul, when it would raise up itself in contemplation of, and communion with the blessed God. And so,

I. THE NECESSITIES of the body hinder the soul's communion with the LORD. Not that the necessities of the body are simply in themselves to be blamed, but the caring for these

doth so exercise the soul in this state, that it cannot attend upon God without distraction. Oh ! how much doth the necessary caring for meat and drink, food and physick, yea, the ordering of temporal affairs, estrange from communion and converse with God ! so that the soul, like poor Martha, is cumbered with many cares, and busied with much serving in this house, and cannot attend so devoutly and entirely as it ought upon the LORD. If the body be pinched with pain, the soul cannot be at rest, but must needs look out for relief ; if the body be pinched with hunger and thirst, the soul can take no rest till it have found out a supply for it ; if the one be sick, the other is sad ; if the one be hungry or thirsty, the other seems to languish ; like Hippocrates his twins, that laughed and cried, lived and died together.

It is a wonderful mystery, and a rare secret, how the soul comes to sympathize with the body, and to have not only a knowledge, but, as it were, a feeling of its necessities ; how these come to be conveyed to the soul, and how it comes to be thus affected with them. But we find it so ; and indeed, to speak truth, it seems necessary for the maintaining of this animal state that it should be so, that the soul should be, as it were, hungry, weary, sick, and sleep too together with the body. “ For if our soul should

“ not know what it is to be hungry, thirsty,
 “ cold, or sick, or weary, but by a bare ratioci-
 “ nation, or a dry syllogistical inference, with-
 “ out any more especial feeling of these neces-
 “ sities, it would soon suffer the body to lan-
 “ guish and decay, and commit it wholly to all
 “ changes and casualties; neither would our
 “ own body be any more to us than the body of
 “ a plant or of a star, which we do many times
 “ view with as much clearness, and contemplate
 “ with as much contentment as we do our
 “ own.” But in the mean time the soul is di-
 verted from its main employment, and turned
 aside from its communion with God; not so
 much by providing somewhat for our bodies to
 eat, and drink, and put on, which is lawful and
 needful, as our SAVIOUR implies, Matth. vi. 32.
 as by sinking itself into the body, being passion-
 ately and inordinately affected with its wants,
 and so being sinfully thoughtful, as our SAVI-
 OUR intimates in the same chapter, & 31.

2. THE Passions of the body hinder the soul's
 communion with the LORD: So powerful is
 the interest and influence that this body hath
 in and over the soul, that it fills it with desires,
 pleasures, griefs, joys, fears, angers, and sun-
 dry passions. The body calls out the soul to
 attend upon its several passions, which I dare
 not say are sinful in themselves, as they first
 affect our souls, no more than it is our sin that

we are men ; our blessed SAVIOUR seems not to have been free from them, as grief, If. liii. . fear, Heb. v. 7. who yet was free from all sin 1 Pet. ii. 22. Nay, it seems necessary, as I said before, considering the nature of this animal life, that the soul should have the corporeal passions and impressions feelingly and powerfully conveyed to it, without which it could not express a due benevolence to the body that belongs to it : and indeed, were it not so, we could not properly be said, in the apostle's phrase here, to be at home in the body ; the soul would rather dwell *in domo aliena quam sua*. But the soul being called out to attend upon these passions, is easily ensnared by them ; for it can hardly exercise itself about them, but it slips insensibly into a sinful inordinacy. As for example, " The animal spirits nimbly playing in the brain, and swiftly flying from thence through the nerves up and down the whole body, do raise the fancy with mirth and chearfulness, which we must not presently mistake for the power of grace, nor condemn for the working of corruption : so also when the gall empties its bitter juice into the liver, and that mingles itself with the blood there, it begets fiery spirits, which presently fly up into the brain, and cause impressions of anger." Now, though I dare not say that the soul's first sensating and entertaining of

these passions is sinful, yet it is sadly evident that our souls being once moved by these undisciplined animal spirits, are very apt to sit upon and cherish those passions of grief, fear, mirth, anger, and, as it were, to work them into itself, in an inordinate manner, and contrary to the dictates of reason; and so the will presently makes those sinful, which before were but merely human, or as one calls them, *ζωαι καυδρον*, the mere blossomings or shootings forth of animal life within us. We see then, in these particulars, that not only the depraved dispositions of the soul do keep us at a distance from God, but even this body also is a great hindrance to that knowledge of God which we shall attain to, that service of God which we might perform, and that sweet communion with him which we shall enjoy. It is a clog to the soul that would run, a mist to the soul that would see clearly, a manacle to the soul that would work, a snare to the soul that would be free, a fetter to chain it to earthly and material things, and, as it were, a pinion to the wings of contemplation. More particularly, it is a hindrance to it, as to these three things which I have named: as to the soul's knowledge of God, the body is an occasion of ignorance and error; as to its serving of God, an occasion of distraction, and weariness, lightness, and triflingness; and, as to its communion with God, an occasion of earthliness and sensuality.

Now this distance which this body keeps the soul at from God might more particularly appear in another way of explication, by observing the especial grievances that arise to the soul from those three great animal faculties, (if I may so speak), the Senses, the Appetite, the Fancy.

(I.) THE Senses, I mean the external senses of the body, seeing, hearing, &c. These convey passions to the soul, upon which it insists and feeds with a sinful fondness and eagerness. Set open the eye, and it will set hard to convey some species to the soul of earthly objects, that shall juggle the ideas of God out of it. Set open the ear, and it will fill the soul with such a noise of earthly tumult, that the secret whispers of the divine Spirit cannot be heard. The like I may say of the rest. Oh! how easily do these discompose the fixed soul, distract the devout soul, cast a mist before the contemplative soul, and hale down the raised soul from communion with Heaven, to converse with earthly objects! *Ut vidi ut perii!* is the complaint of many a Christian, as well as it was of the heathen. The souls of most men are quite sunk into their senses, and do nothing but, as it were, lacquey to them all their lives; and so the servants are on horseback, and princes go on foot. Though the eye will never be satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing, yet forsooth these importunate suitors must be gratified; the eye must

see what it will see, and the ear must hear what it will hear; nothing must be withheld from them, that these childish senses do whine after. These men's souls are indeed incarnate, swallowed up in their eyes, ears, and mouths. But not only these, but even godly souls are often charmed and ensnared by their senses; even they converse not only in the body, but too much with it also, and it becomes as a Delilah to lull them asleep, and bind them too. Good Job found his senses so treacherous, that he was fain to make a covenant with them, Job xxxi. 1. and well if he could scape so too. The words are a metaphor; for indeed the worst of it is, that these senses are not capable of any discipline, one cannot bring them into any covenant-terms; so that whilst we have senses, they will be treacherous; whilst our eyes are in our heads, they will be wandering after forbidden objects.

(2.) THE Appetite, the sensitive appetite, which is a faculty of the sensitive soul, whereby this animal man is stirred up to desire and lust after the things which his senses have dictated to him. This bodily lust following upon the neck of the former, becomes a greater snare to the soul: this restless suitor comes whining ever and anon to the soul for every trifle that the eye hath seen, or the ear heard, or the mouth hath tasted, and by its continual coming, and importunate crying, wearies her into

an observance of it: as the fond child comes crying to the mother for every knack and gaw that it hath seen upon the stalls, and she, tho' she cannot in judgment approve of the request, yet either in fond indulgence, or for peace sake, will condescend to purchase it. This is the daughter of the horse-leech, that cries continually, Give, give. Why, what would it have? even any thing that it hath seen, or heard, or touched, or tasted, any thing that it sees a fellow-creature to be possessed of: and so indeed the appetite doth not only ensnare the soul unto drunkenness and gluttony, but voluptuousness, lasciviousness, and all manner of sensuality. The evil of the sensual appetite appears in wantonness and lasciviousness, (whether real, verbal, or mental), in immoderate and inordinate trading, ingrossing, sporting, building, attiring, sleeping, visiting, as well as in eating and drinking. I will determine nothing concerning the first motions of the appetite, whereby it solicits the will to fulfil it; only this, that if it solicit to any thing simply and morally evil, it is sinful in that first act, and that at all times it ought carefully to be watched, lest it seduce to intemperance in things lawful. But concerning the gratifying of the appetite, seeing there must be in us a sensitive appetite, whilst we are in this animal state, it is to be endeavoured, as far as may be, that we gratify

the appetite, not as it is a sensitive appetite, but under this notion, as the thing that it desires makes for our real good, and tends to the enjoyment of the supreme Good: to eat and drink, not because we are hungry or thirsty, because the appetite desires it, but with reference to the main end, with respect to the highest good, that the body may be enabled, strengthened, and quickened, to wait upon the soul cheerfully, in the actions of a holy life. But this man, in his animal state, cannot perfectly attain to, which shews that the appetite doth keep us at a distance from God.

(3.) THE Fancy; this also keeps man at a distance from God, and hinders us in the knowledge and service of God, and interrupts the soul's communion with God. This is a busy and petulant faculty, or inward sense, and the soul doth readily sensate the passions of it, so that it doth frequently hinder its mental operations, and becomes a great snare. A working fancy, how much soever it is magnified by the wisdom of this world, is a mighty snare to the soul, except it work in a fellowship with right reason, and a sanctified heart. I am persuaded there is no greater burden in the world to a serious soul, especially in hot and dry constitutions, where it is commonly most pregnant, and most impatient of discipline; and, I confess, I have often wondered at the soul's readiness to be so

speedily affected with the phantasms and imaginations of it, and fondness to hug them so dearly. This indeed, if it be so far refined as to present sober and solid imaginations to the mind, and to act in subserviency to sanctified reason, is an excellent handmaid to the soul in many of her functions; but otherwise is a snare, as we have partly observed already, and may observe more, if we study the secrets of our own souls, and the mighty mysteries that are within us. And this doth not only ordinarily disturb, distract, and hinder in ordinary duties, but even when the soul is at the highest pitch of communion and contemplation, it assays to pull it down to attend to its vain phantasms, and indeed gives it many a grievous fall. I doubt not to affirm, that this is the most pernicious enemy of the three that I named, to the soul's happiness, as might appear in many respects; I will only name one. It hath an advantage against us, which neither of the other two hath: it infests us and annoys us sleeping as well as waking. In sleep the senses are locked up, and the appetite is, for the most part, silent from its begging; but then the fancy is as busy and tumultuous as ever, forming and gathering imaginations, and those are commonly wild and senseless, if not worse. The mind, in way of kindness and benevolence to the body, suspends its own actions, whilst the body takes its

rest in the night, and then the rude fancy takes its opportunity to wander at liberty, as being without its keeper, and acts to the disturbance of the body: but that is not the worst; for it becomes so tumultuous and impetuous sometimes, as that it awakens the mind to attend upon its imaginations; and this the soul doth condescend to in an inordinate manner, and sets the stamp of sinfulness upon them, to its own wounding. And now that I am speaking of sleep as a Mantissa to this discourse, I cannot but observe how this very thing also keeps us at a distance from God in this animal state. How is our communion with God interrupted by this! for herein we cease, not only from the actions of an animal life, but commonly from the actions of a spiritual life too. What a great breach, what a sad intercision is there made in our converse with God by this means! Such a poor happiness it is that we have in this world that it is cut off, and seems, as it were, not to be one fourth part of our time; for indeed a happiness that is not felt, deserves not the name of happiness. Some learned and active men have been ashamed that they have slept away so much of their time, which was all too little for their studies and exploits. Ah, poor Christian! that, as it were, sleeps away so much of his God, being as much estranged from him in the night, as though he had never conversed

with him in the day, and in the morning when he awakes, cannot always find himself with him neither; which is enough to make a poor saint wish, either that he might have no need of sleep, or that with the amorous spouse, Song v. 2. tho' he sleep, his heart might wake perpetually.

WE have seen in what sense this mortal body keeps believers absent from the LORD, and in what respects it keeps them at a distance from God, even in this life, from the knowledge of God, the service of God, and communion with him. Here then, by way of application,

1. WE may see that it was for good reason the blessed apostle is confident and willing to depart; nay, he groans within himself, desiring that "mortality might be swallowed up of life." as he speaks, * 4. I told you before, that these words did contain the reason or ground thereof: and by this time I hope you see that the reason is good, and the ground is sufficient. What! will the men of this world say, will you persuade us out of our life? should any thing in the world make a man weary of his life? *Iræstat miserum esse quam non esse.* The apostle was sure besides himself, or he would never have fallen out with his own life; or else he was in a passion, and knew not what he said: or else his life was bitter to him, by reason of the poor, afflicted, persecuted condition that he lived in, and so he was become desperate, and cared not

what became of him. No, none of these : the apostle was in his right wits, and in a sober mind too. It was not a passion, or a fit of melancholy, but his judgment and choice upon good deliberation ; and therefore you find him in the same mind elsewhere, Phil. i. 23. " I desire to depart, and to be with CHRIST, which is far better." Besides, he gives a reason for what he desires ; but we know that passion is unruly and unreasonable. Neither was the apostle besides himself, for he gives a good, solid, and wise reason,—“ Whilst we are at home in the body,” &c. : he will part with his life rather than not be perfectly happy. For, whereas worldlings put such a high price upon life, and think that nothing should persuade men out of their lives ; (it is true indeed, if we speak properly, life is the perfection of the creature, the happiness of every thing is its life ; “ A living dog is better than a dead lion,” Eccl. ix. 4.) ; but I may say to these, even as our SAVIOUR said to the woman in John iv. 18. concerning her husband, the life that we live here is not our life. The union of the sensitive soul with the body is indeed truly and properly the life of a beast, and its greatest happiness, for it is capable of no higher perfection : but the union of the rational soul with God is the noblest perfection of man, and his highest life : so that the life of a believing soul is not destroyed at

death, but perfected. Neither was the apostle weary of his life because of the adversities of it. The apostle was of a braver spirit, sure, than any Stoic: he durst live, though he rather desired to die. All the conflicts he endured with the world never wrung such a sigh from him as the conflict he had with his own corruptions did, Rom. vii. 24. "O wretched man," &c. All the persecutions in the world never made him groan so much as the burden of his flesh doth here, and his great distance from the LORD. A godly soul can converse with persecuting men and a tempting devil, can handle briers and thorns, can grapple with any kind of oppressions and adversities in the flesh, without despondency, so long as it finds itself in the bosom of God, and in the arms of Omnipotence; but when it begins to consider where it is, how far it is from its God, its life, and the happy state that God hath prepared it for, then it cannot but groan within itself, and be ready, with Peter, to cast itself out of the ship to get to its God, to land itself in eternity. Neither indeed, to speak truly, is it only the sense of sin against God, which sets the godly soul a-going: for though it must be confessed that this is a heavy burden upon the soul, yet the apostle makes no complaint of this here, but only of his distance from God, that necessary distance from God that the body kept him at.

2. SEE here the excellent spirit of true religion. Godly souls do groan after an unbodied state, not only because of their sins in the body, but even because of the necessary distance at which the body keeps them from God. We may suppose a godly soul, at some time, to have no manner of affliction in the world to grieve him, no sin unpardoned, unrepented of, to trouble him; yet for all this he is not at perfect rest; he is burdened, and groans within himself, because he is at such a distance from that absolute God, whom he longs to know more familiarly, and enjoy more fully than he doth yet, or than is allowed to mortal men: and though nothing else ail him, yet the consideration of this distance makes him cry out, Oh! "when shall I come and appear before God?" he wholly swallowed up in him, see him as he is, and converse with him face to face. Bare innocency, or freedom from sin, cannot satisfy that noble and large spirit that is in a truly God-like soul; but that spirit of true goodness, being nothing else but an efflux from God himself, carries the soul out after a more intimate union with that Being from whence it came: God dwelling in the soul, doth, by a secret mighty power, draw the soul more and more to himself. In a word, a godly soul that is really touched with the sense of divine sweetness and fulness, and impressed with divine good-

ness and holiness, as the wax is with the stamp of the seal, could not be content to dwell for ever in this kind of animal body, nor take up an eternal rest in this imperfect mixed state, though it could converse with the world without a sinful sully of itself, but must needs endeavour still a closer conjunction with God; and, leaving the chace of all other objects, pant and breathe not only after God alone, but after more and more of him; and not only when it is under the sense of sin, but most of all when it is under the most powerful influences of divine grace and love, cry out with Paul, "Oh, who will deliver me out of this body!"

3. SUFFER me from hence to expostulate a little, to expostulate with Christian souls about their unseemly temper. Doth this animal life and mortal body keep us at such a distance from our God, our happiness? Why are we then so fond of this life and mixed state? why do we so pamper this body? why so anxiously studious to keep it up, so dreadfully afraid of the ruins of it? If we take the apostle's words in the first sense that I named, then I may ask with him in the first verse, "Know we not, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens?" or, $\S$ 8. Why are we not willing rather to be "absent from the body," and to be "present with the

"LORD?" If we take them in the latter sense, as this animal body is an hinderance to the soul's knowledge of, and communion with God, then I ask concerning this, as the apostle doth concerning rich men, James ii. 6. Why do ye pamper, prize, honour, doat upon this body? Doth not this body oppress you, distract you, burden you, clog you, hinder you? doth not this body interpose between the Sun of Righteousness, between the Father of lights, and your souls that should shine with a light and glory borrowed from him; even as the dark body of the earth interposes between the sun and moon, to eclipse its light? why are we not rather weary that we are in the body? Surely there are some objections, some impediments to the soul's longing after its happy state, which I shall come to anon; but I doubt also, that there is something that chains the soul to this animal life, some cords in this earthly tabernacle that tie up the soul in it; but I cannot well imagine what they should be. Say not, there is something of God to be enjoyed in this life, which makes it pleasant; for, although this be true, yet I am sure God gives nothing of himself to a soul thereby to clog it or cloy it. Did Moses send for some clusters of the land of Canaan into the wilderness, think ye, that the people might see and taste the fruits, and sit still, and be satisfied, and say, Oh, it is enough, we

see that there are pleasant things in that land, we will never come at it? or did he not rather do it that they might make the more haste to possess themselves of it? Will any man say, Away, I will have no more land, no more money, I have some already? Can a godly soul say, God hath given me an earnest, I desire no more? No, no; but the report that a Christian hears of a rest remaining, a happy life remaining for it, and the chariots of divine graces that he sees God hath sent out into his soul to convey it thither, make him cry out, not with Jacob, Gen. xlv. 28. "It is enough, Joseph my son is yet alive," &c. but, Oh! this is not enough, this report is not enough; it is not enough that I taste some of the good things of the land, it is not enough that I see these carriages sent for me, it is not enough that my soul hath an happy and honourable life prepared for it; I see it indeed before I die, but I will also die that I may see it better, and enjoy it more. But I doubt there is some earthly tie, even upon the heavenly soul, that chains it to this present animal body; but sure I am, that whatsoever it is, it is but a weak one. Is there any worldly accommodation, any creature-toy, that should in reason step between a soul and its God? Is this life sweet, because there are creature-comforts to be enjoyed? and will it not be a better life, when creature-comforts

shall not be needed? and are the pleasures of this body, the comforts of this life, the flattering smiles, the fawning embraces of the creature, such a mighty contentment to a soul, to a soul acquainted with the highest Good? Hast thou, O my soul, any such full and satisfying entertainment in thy pilgrimage, as to make thee loth to go home? wilt thou hide thyself with Saul among the stuff, among the lumber of the world, when thou art sought for to be crowned? are the empty sounds of popular applause, the breaking bubbles of secular greatness, the shallow streams of sensual pleasures, the smiling dalliance, and lisping eloquence of wives and children, the flying shadows of creature-refreshments, the momentary flourishes of worldly beauty and bravery, are these meat for a soul? are these the proper object, or the main happiness of such a divine thing as an immortal soul? Why are we not rather weary of this body, that makes us so weary of heavenly employment? why do we not rather long to part with that life that parts us from our life? and instead of the young apostle, "It is good to be here," cry out with the sweet singer, "Oh that one would give me the wings of a dove, that I may fly away and be at rest."

AND now, methinks, by this time I might be somewhat bold, and form my remaining discourse into an exhortation. But it may be

you will not bear it all at once; therefore I will first begin with a dehortation, to dissuade from two evils concerning your body, *viz.* Fear and Fondness.

I. TAKE heed of fear for the body. I speak not so much of those first impressions which our fancies and animal spirits do make upon our minds, though it were to be wished that the mind did not so much as once sensible or entertain these; but of those acts of the will, whereby it doth receive, allow, cherish these impressions, until the cockatrice-egg be hatched into a viper. I speak not against care and circumspection, no; nor against that kind of suspicion whereby wise and prudent persons are jealous of circumstances and events, and so do watch to prevent, remove, or manage bodily evils, which is called *fear*; though even in these there may be an extreme, a "fear where no fear is," Ps. liii. 5. which is there ascribed to the wicked, and elsewhere threatned as a judgment, Lev. xxvi. 36. "The sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them;" Deut. xxviii. 65. "The LORD shall give thee a trembling heart," &c. Prov. xxii. 3. "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself;" but there are also many fools who hide themselves, though they see no evil. But I am not speaking of these; there is a vast difference between care and fear. By fear I mean that trembling, fluctuating, tor-

menting passion, that doth not suffer the heart to be at rest, but doth, as it were, unhinge it, and loose the joints of the soul, whether it breaks out into expressions or no; it clouds the understanding, unsettles the will, disorders the affections, confounds the memory, and is like an earthquake in the soul, taking it off from its own basis, destroying the consistency of it, and hurling all the faculties into confusion: this, whether it break out into any unseemly acts or not, which commonly it doth, is itself an unseemly temper for a wise man, much more for a godly. I might speak as a philosopher, and shew how unbecoming a man, and how destructive to him this passion is; so much, that whilst it doth predominate, it almost robs him of that which is his greatest glory, even reason itself. But, to say no worse of it, it is very opposite, if not contrary, to that noble grace of faith, whereby the steady soul rests and lodges in the arms of God, as in its centre. But, to speak to the thing in hand, what an unseemly passion is this? we would have the world to believe that we have laid up our happiness in God, and that we are troubled that we are so far from him; and yet we are afraid lest that should be taken out of the way that keeps us at a distance from him: we flatter ourselves that we are in haste for heaven, and yet we are dreadfully afraid lest our rubs should

be taken out of the way. How do these things hang together? Are we persuaded, that if this earthly house of our tabernacle were taken down, we have a building not made with hands, eternal in the heavens? if not, why do we yet call ourselves Christians? But, I think, I may take it for granted we are all so persuaded; and if so, why are we so afraid it should be taken down? I am loth to speak what I think; yet methinks the entire and ardent love which we either do bear, or ought to bear, to the blessed God, and union and communion with him, should cast out this fear. This is suitable to scripture, 1 John iv. 18. I will not dispute how far sinful fear for the body may carry a godly soul; the further the worse, I am sure: but if any will needs be so indulgent to his own passions, and so much an enemy to his own peace, as to encourage himself to fear, which is a strange thing, from the example of Abraham denying his wife, or Peter denying his Lord, let him compare the issue, and then let me see whether he dare go and do likewise: but if that will not fright you from fear, chew upon these two considerations.

(I.) I PRAY you seriously dispute the matter with yourselves, how far fear of sickness and death may consist with that ardent thirst after union and perfect communion with the blessed God, with which we ought to be possessed.

(2.) DISPUTE seriously how far it can stand with the sincerity of a Christian. God hath not left us in the dark as to this matter. I will turn you to a text or two, which, methinks, should strike cold to all slavish, trembling professors, Prov. xxviii. 1. Job xv. 20. 21. "The wicked travaileth with pain all his days, a dreadful sound is in his ears." They are the words of Eliphaz indeed, but they do agree with the words of God himself, Isa. xxxiii. 14. "The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites." When I read over these texts, I cannot but pray, and cry, O my soul, come not thou into the number of the wicked, and be not united into the assembly of hypocrites!

2. TAKE heed of fondness of the body; of a double act of it, priding, pampering.

(1.) TAKE heed you pride not yourselves in any excellencies of the body. Doth this mortal body keep us at a distance from our God? do we well then to love that which keeps us from that which is most lovely? why do we stand fondly gazing upon that which keeps us from the blessed sight of God? If you ask me, did ever any man hate his own flesh? I will ask you again, Did ever any wise man love his own flesh above him that made it? did ever any godly soul love his body in opposition to his God? Oh, but it is a comely body! And what is a

beautiful body but a fair prison? A silver twist, or a clog of gold, do as really hinder the flight of a bird, and forestal her liberty, as a stone tied at her heels. Nay, those very excellencies which you so much admire, are so much the greater hinderances. If we had learned that excellent lesson indeed, of enjoying all things only in God, then the several beauties and braveries of the body would be a help to our devotion, they would carry us up to an admiration and contemplation of that glorious and most excellent Being from whom they were communicated: so we might, in some sense, look into a glass, and behold the beauty of God. But, alas! these commonly prove the greater snares: many had been more beautiful within had they been less beautiful without; more chaste, if less comely; many had been more peaceable, and more at peace too, if they had been less able to have quarrelled and fought. It was said of Galba, who was an ingenuous man, but deformed, that his soul dwelt ill; but, sure I am, it might better have been so said of beautiful Absalom, or Jezabel, whose bodies became a snare to their souls. On the other hand, they that want a beauty in their bodies, will perhaps labour to find an excellency in their minds far beyond it; as the philosopher advised to look often into a glass, *ut si deformis sis, corrigas formositatem morum, &c.*

(2.) TAKE heed of pampering the body, of treating it too gently and delicately. Deny it nothing that may fit it for the service of God and your own souls, and allow it no more than may do that. Thy pampering is, 1. Unseemly: What! make a darling of that which keeps us from our LORD; carry it gently, and delicately, and tenderly towards that, which whilst we carry about with us we cannot be happy! 2. Injurious: If you bring up this servant delicately from a child, you shall have him become your son at length, yea, your master. If you do by your bodies, as the fond king did by his son Adonijah, 1 Kings i. 6. never displease it, never reprove it, never deny it, it will do with you in time as he did, raise seditions in your soul. Go on, and please, and pamper, and cocker your bodies, and it will come to this at length, that you must deny them nothing; you must give whatsoever a whining appetite will crave; go whither your gadding senses will carry you, and speak whatsoever wanton Fancy will suggest. Doth not the body itself set us at a sufficient distance from God, but we must estrange ourselves more from him by pleasuring it; spend the time that should be for God in decking, trimming, and adorning it! When you cram this, you feed a bird that will pick out your eyes; you nourish a traitor when you gratify this Adonijah. In a word, is it not enough

that we do all carry fire in our bosoms, but we must also blow it up into a flame? "Nay, my brethren, do not so foolishly."

AND now, methinks, by this time, I may venture upon an exhortation, by degrees at least.

1st, "WATCH against the body." You have heard how the senses, appetite, and fancy become a snare to the soul's living unto, and conversing with God. Now then, if you seriously design communion with Heaven, if you place your happiness in the knowledge and enjoyment of that supreme and eternal Good, it becomes you to watch against all things that may distract or divert you from it, or make you fall short of the glory of God. Men that live upon earthly designs, whose great ambition it is to be great in the world, do not only use the most effectual means; and take the most direct courses to accomplish those designs, and attain those ends, but do continually suspect, and diligently watch against all the moths that would corrupt, the rust that would consume, the thieves that would plunder their treasures; and, in a word, against all possible hinderances, defraudations, and disappointments: so will we suspect and watch, sure, against all enemies and traitors to our souls, if we live here upon eternal designs, if our ambition be to be great in God alone. And the more eminent the danger is, the more will we watch. Have you not

found by experience, which of these three have been most prejudicial to your communion with God? if not, you have not been so studious to know the state, nor pursue the happiness of your own souls as you might; if so, then watch against that most of all which you have found to be most injurious. For it ordinarily comes to pass, either by the difference of constitutions, or difference of temptations, or different ways of living, or some other thing, that God's children are more ensnared by some one of these than another. Well, be sure to watch and pray, and strive more especially against the more especial enemies of your souls.

2dly, "LIVE above the body;" above bodily enjoyments, ornaments, and excellencies. Tho' these bodily enjoyments be never so sweet, these bodily ornaments never so glorious, yet is not your happiness in these. Certainly they live to their loss who live upon the excellencies of their own souls, whether natural or supernatural; they deprive themselves of the infinite glory, fulness, and sufficiency that is in the blessed God, who take up their happiness in these: much more do they pinch and impoverish their own souls, who live upon bodily ornaments or excellencies, wherein many inferior creatures do excel them; the rose in beauty, the sun in brightness, the lion in strength, the stag in swiftness, &c. If a woman were as lovely as

the morning, "fair as the moon, clear as the sun," if a man were full of personal grace and majesty, "terrible as an army with banners," yet were not their happiness in these accomplishments. Nay, which is worse, these ornaments stand between us and our happiness. When you begin therefore at any time fondly to admire any of these bodily excellencies, then think with yourselves, Oh, but all these do not make my soul happy! Nay, this beautiful outside must stink, and be deformed, these fair and flourishing members must wither in the dust, this active, strong, and graceful body must be buried in disgrace and weakness, before I can attain to entire and perfect happiness. This consideration will advance us to live above the body.

3dly, "Be content to be unbodied for a time." Is it true, that we can no otherwise be happy, no otherwise be present with God, know him familiarly, enjoy him perfectly and entirely? cannot we get to him except we go through the dust? Be it so then; be content to be unbodied for a time. *Occidat modo imperet*, could the Heathen say concerning her sord; much rather may a Christian say concerning his Father, Let him slay me, so my soul may but reign with him, which is by his reigning in it; let him kill me, so he will but fill me; let him draw me through the dust of the earth, so he will but

draw me out of this dust of the world, so he will but draw me nigh unto himself, and bring me into a full and inseparable conjunction with my LORD! Methinks I need not use many arguments to persuade a soul that is feelingly overpowered, mastered, ravished with the infinite beauty, goodness, glory, and fulness of his God, to be willing to quit a dusty tabernacle for a time, wherein it is almost swallowed up, to depart, and to be entirely swallowed up in him. Nay, suppose a Christian in the lowest form, who hath but chosen God for his highest good and only happiness, as every sincere Christian hath, methinks he should have learned this lesson, to comply with that infinite, perfect will, that governs both him and the whole world. I cannot conceive a godly soul without the subduing of self-will, nor suppose a sincere saint void at least of the habit of self-resignation. Therefore I will add no more concerning this, but rise a step higher.

4thly, "LONG after an unbodied state," desire to depart, and to be with the LORD, groan within yourselves to have mortality swallowed up of life, in which temper you find the holy apostle. To be content to die is a good temper, a temper scarce to be found, I think, in any wicked man; not from a right principle, I am sure: but, methinks, it is no very great thing, in comparison of what we should labour to at-

tain to. Think on a little ; what a strange kind of cold uncouth phrase it is, such a man is content to be happy ! Men are not said to be content to be rich, but covetous ; not willing to be honoured, but ambitious ; and why should ye only be content to be with God ? I am persuaded there is no shew nor semblance of satisfactory bliss and happiness for a soul, a noble immortal nature, but only in the supreme, essential, perfect, absolute Good, the blessed and eternal God : and should not this noble active being be carried out with vehement longings after its proper and full happiness, as well as this earthly sluggish body is carried with restless appetite after health, safety, and liberty ? Why should a soul alone be content to be happy, when all other things in the world do so ardently court, and vehemently pursue their respective ends and several perfections ? Certainly, if the blessed and glorious God should display himself in all his beauty, and open all his infinite treasures of goodness, and sweetness, and fulness within the view of a soul, it could not but be ravished with the object, earnestly press into his presence, *ruere in amplexus*, and, with a holy impatience, throw itself into his arms : there would be no need of setting bounds to the mount, to keep it from breaking through unto the LORD. What is said of the Queen of the South, when she had heard the

wisdom, and seen the glory of Solomon, 2 Chron. ix. 4. would be more true of a Christian, there would be no more spirit left in him. Some have therefore observed the wisdom of God in engaging the soul in so near an union with the body, that it might care for it, and not quit it : yea, the Heathen observed the wisdom of God in concealing the happy state of a separated soul, that so men might be content to live out their time, *victurosque Dii celant, ut vivere durent, felix esse mori.*” But, alas ! we see but darkly as through a glass, and our affections towards God are proportionable to our apprehensions of him ; these are dark, and therefore those are dull. And oh ! would to God they were but indeed proportionable ! for then we should love him only, if not earnestly, and desire him entirely, if not sufficiently. Consider what I have hinted concerning the happiness of the soul in the enjoyment of God, and what I have more fully demonstrated concerning the body’s hindering of it, and keeping it at a distance, and then argue, is happiness the main end of every being ? must not this soul, then, being a noble and immortal nature, needs look out for some high and noble happiness, suitable to its excellent self ? can that be any where but in the enjoyment of the highest and uncreated Good ? and can this never be attained whilst we are in this animal state ? Oh ! why then do

we not look out after so much enjoyment of this blessed God as we are now capable of, and long after a departure hence, that we may enjoy him freely and fully, and be eternally happy in him? Oh! be not only content, but even covetous.

BUT what! shall the soul break the cage, that she may take her flight? God forbid! how can he pretend to be a lover of God, who is not formed into his will, subject to his ordination, content to abide in the station that he hath allotted him? But if we may not break it to escape, yet, methinks, it may be safe enough, with submission, to with it were broken; if we may not, with Saul, dissolve ourselves, yet, with Paul, we may desire to be dissolved. The perfection that the most Christians attain to is but to desire to live, and be content to die. Oh! consider what I have said in this matter, and invert the order of those words in your hearts, Be content to live, desire to die.

BUT what! would you have us pray for death? Answer: I speak not of a formal praying either for one or other. What the apostle speaks of the greatest of sins, 1 John v. 16. I am ready to say of this state of freedom from all sin, "I do not say that ye should pray for it." You will tell me, that David and Hezekiah prayed for life, and I can tell you that Elijah prayed for death, 1 Kings xix. 4.; he was indeed a

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man subject to passions, James v. 17. but I believe this was none of them. But I will not inveigle myself in any controversy: methinks the sad consideration laid before your eyes, whilst we are in the body we are absent, distant from the LORD, should wring out an "O wretched man that I am," &c. or an "I desire to be dissolved;" or if not words, yet at least a groan after immortality, with our apostle here,—"We groan within ourselves, that mortality may be swallowed up of life."

BUT can a soul possibly long for the destruction of the body? Philosophy indeed tells us that it cannot. Be it so; yet I am sure divinity teaches, that a soul may long after the redemption of the body, the redemption of it from this kind of animal, corruptible, ensnaring condition that it is now in, Rom. viii. 23.—"We groan within ourselves, waiting for the redemption of our body." If we cannot wish to be unclothed, yet we may long to be clothed upon, * 4. of this chapter; at least, methinks, the Heathen should not out-do us, who could say, *Mori nolo, sed me mortuum esse nihil curo.*

BUT, will all cry, Oh! if we were sure of an interest in CHRIST, of pardon of sin, of truth, of grace, of eternal life, then we could freely leave all.

Ans. I. THAT is, you would live to be more holy before you die; you are not yet holy

enough, no, nor never shall be till you die. If you long after holiness, long to be with God, for that is a state of perfect holiness. To desire to live, upon pretence of being more holy, is a mere falacy, a contradiction. But, it may be, this is not the meaning of the objection: therefore,

2. A NOT having of what we would have is not an excuse for not doing what we should do. It is our duty to rejoice in the LORD, Phil. iv. 4. which our not having of assurance doth not exempt us from; though, if we have assurance, we might indeed rejoice the more. But, to take off this plea at once,

3. OUR earnest longings after a full and perfect enjoyment of God, and so our breathings after an immortal state, do not depend upon our assurance, but indeed assurance rather depends upon that. I doubt we are commonly mistaken in the nature of assurance, and, it may be, are in a wrong manner curious about the signs of CHRIST's appearing in our souls; for certainly a well-grounded assurance of the love of God doth most discover and unfold itself in the growth of true godliness in the soul. Now, the love of God, and an earnest desire to be like unto him, and to be with him, is the better half of all religion, Matth. xxii. 37. 38. so that it rather seems that assurance springs

up from this frame of soul, than that this arises out of assurance. If assurance be the thing that you desire, get your souls joined to God in an union of affections, will, and ends, and then labour and long to be closer to him, liker to him, perfectly holy and happy in him, and be assured that CHRIST is in you of a truth: for these mighty works which he hath wrought, these divine breathings, these holy pantings after him, do bear witness of him.

4. WHETHER ever you come to that feeling knowledge, that powerful sense of your state, or no, which you call assurance, yet know that it is your duty to long after immortality. We are wont to call assurance the privilege of some few, but the scripture makes this temper that I am speaking of the duty of all believers; which I do the rather name, because I find few professors of this temper, and indeed but few that are willing to believe that they ought to be. Our SAVIOUR calls all believers to as much in effect as I do, Luke xxi. 28. "Look up, and lift up your heads, for the day of your redemption draweth nigh:" whereby is not meant a bare posture and speculation, but joy and longing are required by that phrase, say the Dutch annotat. See also Rev. xxii. 17. Consider further, (which, methinks, should strike cold to the hearts of cold-hearted professors),

that this very temper is made one of the greatest characters of true and sincere saints: I do not know of any one oftner named: see Rom. viii. 23. "We groan within ourselves, waiting for the redemption of our body."—2 Tim. iv. 8. "The LORD shall give the crown to them that love his appearing."—Tit. ii. 13. we should live godly in this present world, "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST."—2 Pet. iii. 11. 12. "What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for, and hastening to the coming of the day of God?"—Jude, & 21. "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our LORD JESUS CHRIST unto eternal life." Do all these plain and pathetical scriptures stand for ciphers in your eye? methinks they should not. But not to stand upon the proof of it to be a duty, it matters not whether there be an express command for it or no: this that I am speaking of is not so much the duty of godly persons, as the very nature, genius, and spirit indeed of godliness itself. Methinks a godly soul, that is truly touched with divine Goodness, influenced by it, and impressed with it, as the needle is with the loadstone, must needs strive powerfully within itself to be in

conjunction with it : a holy soul, that after all its wearisome defeats, and shameful disappointments in the creature, finds itself perfectly matched with this infinite, full, and perfect object, must certainly and necessarily be carried, without any other argument, with fervent longings after union to it, and communion with it. The spouse might say concerning CHRIST, as he concerning her, Song vi. 12. " Or ever I " was aware my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadab : " and every godly soul may, in some degree, say with that spouse, Cant. v. 4. 5. " My beloved put in his hand by the " hole of the door, and my bowels were moved " for him : I rose up," &c. Tell me, friends, how can divine grace, that well of living water in the soul, chuse but spring up into eternal life ? John iv. 14. I doubt not to affirm, that that which is of God in the soul must needs carry the soul after God ; as it belongs to heaven, so it will be longing towards heaven. That which is of a divine original must needs have a divine tendency ; that which is of divine extraction, will have in it a divine attraction, and pursue a divine perfection, Col. iii. 1. That divine life and spirit that runs through godly souls, doth awaken and exalt, in some measure, all the powers of them into an active and chearful sympathy with that absolute Good

that renders them completely blessed. Holiness and purity of heart will be attracting God more and more to itself; and the more pure our souls are, and the more separate from earthly things, the more earnestly will they endeavour the nearest union that may be with God; and so, by consequence, methinks they must needs, in some sense, desire the removal of that animal life, and dark body that stands in their way; for they know, that that which now letteth will let, (such is the unchangeable nature of it), till it be laid in the dust, till it be taken out of the way. The thirsty king did but cry for water of the well of Bethlehem, and his champions broke through the host of the Philistines and fetcht it, 2 Sam. xxiii. 15. and will ye not allow the thirsty soul, if not to break through to fetch it, yet at least to break out into an "Oh that one would give me "to drink" of the living water, of the fountain of grace, and peace, and love? will ye allow hunger to break down stone walls? and will ye neither allow the hungry soul to break down these mud walls, nor to wish within itself that they were broken down? In a word, then, give me leave earnestly to press you to an earnest pressing after perfect fruition of, and eternal converse with God; and, to change the apostle's words, Heb. xii. 1. Seeing we are

compassed about with so great a divine light, and glory, and brightness, let us be willing and desirous to lay aside this weight of flesh, and this body, that so easily resists us with sins and snares, and run with eagerness to the object that is set before us. Amen, Amen.

DRAW ME, WE WILL RUN AFTER THEE.

T H E
ANGELICAL LIFE.

MATTH. xxii. 30.

—ARE AS THE ANGELS OF GOD IN HEAVEN.

THE doctrine of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and the great things of the Christian religion, as they were accounted strange things by all the world when they were first published and preached, so indeed by none less entertained, or rather more opposed, than by the wisest of men living in that age, *viz.* Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, who were the “disputers of this world,” as the apostle’s phrase is, 1 Cor. i. 20. a thing of wonderful observation, not only to us in our day, but even to our blessed LORD himself in the days of his flesh, who fetches the cause of it from heaven, and adores the infinite Wisdom of God in it, Matth. xi. 25. Amongst other set disputations that the Sadducees held with our SAVIOUR, this in this chapter is very famous; where they dispute against the resurrection of the dead, by an argument fetcht *ab absurdo*, & 25. grounded upon an instance of a woman that had been married to seven husbands successively. Now, say they, if there be a resurrection, whose wife shall she be

then? Our SAVIOUR answers by destroying the ground of their argument, and shewing that they disputed upon a false supposition; for, saith he, "In the resurrection there shall be no marrying; but men shall be as the angels of God." In which words this doctrine is plainly laid down, (for I shall not meddle with the controversy),

"THAT the glorified saints shall be as the angels of God in heaven." The other evangelists lay down the same truth, see Mark xii. 25. Luke xx. 36. In the explication of which point I will shew, I. Negatively, wherein the saints shall not be like the angels. II. Affirmatively, wherein they shall be like unto them, or, as St Luke hath it, equal to them.

I. NEGATIVELY.] I. "THE glorified saints shall not be like the angels in essence." The angelical essence, and the rational soul are, and shall be different. Souls shall remain souls still, keep their own essence: the essence shall not be changed; souls shall not be changed into angelical essences.

2. "THEY shall not be wholly spirits without bodies," as the angels. The spirits of just men now made perfect, are more like to the angels in this sense than they shall be after the resurrection; for now they are spirits without bodies; but the saints shall have bodies, (not such as now, so corruptible, so crazy), not in

any thing defective, not needing creature supplies, but incorruptible, glorious bodies, in some sense spiritual bodies; which are described by three characters, 1 Cor. xv. 42. 43. incorruptible, (somewhat more than immortal), glorious, powerful. Neither doth their having bodies any whit abate of their perfection or glory, nor render them inferior to the angels; for even the glorious REDEEMER of the world hath a body, who is yet superior to the angels; and he shall change the vile bodies of the saints, and make them like unto his glorious body, Philip. iii. ult,

3. "NEITHER have we any ground to believe that the saints shall be altogether equal to the angels in dignity and glory:" but rather, that as man was at first made a little lower than the angels, so that he shall never come to be exalted altogether so high as they; for it seems, that the natural capacity of an angel is greater than of a man, and so shall continue, for they are a distinct kind of creatures. As a beast cannot become so wise and intelligent as a man, for then he would cease to be a beast; so neither can a man become so large and capable as an angel, for then he would cease to be a man.

II. AFFIRMATIVELY.] THE glorified saints shall be like the angels of God in heaven, 1st, In their qualities; that is,

1. "IN being pure and holy." Whether they shall be equal to them in positive holiness or no I know not; whether they shall understand, and know, and love God, in all degrees, as much as the angels; it seems rather that they shall not, because, as I said before, their capacity shall not be so large. But if in this they be not altogether equal to the angels, yet it implies no imperfection; for they shall be positively holy, as far as their nature is capable, and so shall be perfect in their kind, Heb. xii. 23. "The spirits of just men made perfect:" they shall in this be like unto the angels, if not equal to them, yea, like unto God himself in it; "Be ye holy, as I am holy," 1 Pet. i. 16. Matth. v. *ult.* But as to negative holiness, the saints shall be even equal to the angels of God in heaven, *i. e.* they shall have no more sin, no more corruption than they have: they shall be as perfectly freed from all iniquities, imperfection, and infirmities, as the angels. What can be cleaner than that which hath no uncleanness at all in it? Why, so clean shall all the saints be, Rev. xxi. 27. "No unclean thing shall enter into heaven." They shall be without all kind of spot or blemish, Eph. v. 27. which is a perfect negative holiness; more cannot be said of the angels in this respect. As branches of this:

2. "As the holy angels do reverence the divine Majesty, Isa. vi. 2. 3.;" they cover their

faces with their wings, crying, "Holy, holy, " holy is the LORD of hosts," so shall the glorified saints. You may see what sweet harmony they make, consenting together to give the glory of all to God, Rev. vii. 9. 11. 12. The saints stood and cried, "Salvation to our God " who sitteth upon the throne, and to the " LAMB;" the angels stood round about, saying, "Amen, Amen,"

3. IN their readiness to do the will of God, "and execute his commands;" therefore the angels are described to have wings, Isa. vi. 2. "with twain they did fly," How God shall please to employ angels or saints in the world to come, is not for us to inquire; but they shall be alike ready to do his will, and serve his pleasure, whatever it shall be. Even whilst the saints are imperfect on earth they can cry, "Here am I, send me," Isa. vi. 8. how much more ready shall they be then, when all their fetters are knocked off!

4. THEY shall be as the angels "in their " chearful and unwearied execution of the " will of God." So the angels are, and so shall the saints be. The spirit shall be then more willing, and the flesh shall be no more weak, as it is now; for when it is raised again, it shall be in power, 1 Cor. xv. 43. More things of this nature might be added, but I pass lightly over them; because, although they be true, yet they

are not principally looked at in this text: therefore I come to the second thing wherein the glorified saints shall be like unto the angels, and that is,

IN their way of living. They shall be like the angels, *i. e.* faith one truly, ἰσαγγέλως βιῶντες, living like the angels. How is that? our SAVIOUR tells us, neither marrying, nor being given in marriage; it is added presently in Luke xx. 36. "For neither can they die any more." If there be no dying, there will be no need of propagation; if no need of propagation, then why should they marry? The angels are single, and know no other conjunction but with God in a spiritual manner; no more shall the saints. But what great matter is that to be like the angels in? what perfection is that? Many saints, yea, and sinners too upon earth, are so like the angels, nay, and the devils too. Therefore you must know that our SAVIOUR under this phrase of not marrying, &c. doth comprehend all manner of creature-converse, all kind of living upon, and delighting in the creature, by a synecdoche of the part, as is ordinary in scripture; "I have not given upon usury," faith the prophet, "yet the people curse me," Jer. xv. 10. *i. e.* I have had no dealing in the world, no negotiation. By one kind he understands the whole. Ezek. xxv. 41. where, by eating their fruits, and drinking their milk, is understood

the possessing of all that was theirs; and in many other places the Spirit of God uses this tropical way of speaking.

THE angels of God neither marry, nor are given in marriage, *i. e.* they live not upon any created good, delight not in any created comfort, but live entirely upon God, converse with him, are everlastingly beholding his glory, and delighting themselves in him. Thus shall the glorified saints live for ever: their bodies shall not need nor use created supplies, food, physic, raiment, &c. which things in this animal state they stand in need of, Matth. vi. 32. But that's not all: for their souls shall not any longer desire, nor hanker after any created thing, but, as the angels, shall be possessed of God, filled with the fulness of God; all the powers and faculties of them perfectly refined and spiritualized, abstracted from all created things, eternally rejoicing and delighting themselves in the contemplation and participation of the supreme and infinite Good: for during this earthly and imperfect state, not only the bodies of good men feed upon, and are sustained by the creatures, in common with other men, but even their souls do taste too much of worldly contentments, and drink too deep of earthly pleasures and creature comforts: even the most refined souls upon earth, though they do not properly feed upon any thing below God, yet

do oft dip the end of their rod in this honey that lyes upon the earth, (with Jonathan), do cast an unchaste eye upon their earthly enjoyments, and delight in them in a way too gross and unspiritual, having abstracted them from God, and loving them with a distinct love. But in the resurrection it shall not be so; for the holy souls shall be perfectly conformed to the holy God, shall feed upon him singly, live upon him entirely, be wrapt up in him wholly, and be satisfied with him solely and everlastingly, and so shall they be ἰσάγγελοι, equal to the angels. The creature, although it does not fill any truly sanctified soul upon earth, yet it hath some room there; but then it shall be perfectly cast out, and the soul shall be filled with all the fulness of God. The creature is now much in some godly souls, and something in all of them; but then it shall be nothing at all to them, or in them, but God shall be all in all, all things in all of them; as the way of the saints living, and their glorified state is described, 1 Cor. xv. 28. ἵνα ἢ ὁ ΘΕΟΣ τὰ πάντα ἐν πάντιν, "that God may be all
 " in all." "They shall inherit all things:" But how is that? why, see the explication of it in the following words, "He that overcometh shall
 " inherit all things, and I will be his God," Rev. xxi. 7. God will be their God, God shall be unto them instead of all things. In that state there shall be no need of sun or moon, Rev.

xxi. 23. by which excellent and useful creatures the whole creation seems to be understood; for they that shall live above the sun and moon, shall certainly live above all things that are below these: but how then? why it follows, "The glory of God shall enlighten them, and the LAMB shall be their light:" so Rev. xxii. 5. "And there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the LORD giveth them light." All happiness is derived into them from God, and therefore there shall be no night, no want of any creature comfort to them; neither shall they desire any thing more of the creature, whether small or great, whether candle or sun. For explication of this their blessed life, let me allude to that of our SAVIOUR, Luke xii. 24. "The fowls of heaven neither sow nor reap, yet God feedeth them;" so the saints in heaven neither want nor desire any created good, for they feed upon God the supreme and infinite Good: and again, v. 27. "The lilies neither toil nor spin, and yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." These blessed souls have no respect at all to things terrene and created; yet they are so filled and adorned with the glory of the infinite Majesty, that Solomon in all his glory was a filthy and ragged thing in comparison of them. In a word, the state of the glorified saints and an-

gels is fet out by our SAVIOUR in the ſame manner, by one and the ſame deſcription, and that is the ſeeing of God : the life of angels is called a continual beholding of the face of God, Matth. xviii. 10. and the ſtate of the ſaints' glory and happineſs is alſo a ſeeing of God, Matth. v. 8. Heb. xii. 14. Rev. xxii. 4. " They ſhall ſee " his face, and his name ſhall be in their fore- " heads." Now, this phraſe, the ſeeing of God, applied both to the ſaints and angels, doth place their happineſs in God alone, excluding the creature ; and it doth import the fulneſs and clearneſs, and certainty of that their bliſs.

THUS I have ſhewed you in what ſenſe, tho' I am not able to ſhew you in what degree, the glorified ſaints ſhall be like the angels of God in heaven : their way of living, *viz.* upon the bleſſed God alone, ſhall be the ſame with that of the holy angels.

APPLICATION.

FROM the diſcovery of the future ſtate of the ſaints, I find myſelf filled with indignation.

I. REPROOF againſt the carnal conceits that many Chriſtians have of heaven. Chriſtians do I call them ! nay, herein they ſeem rather Mahometans, who place heaven in the full and laſting enjoyment of all creature-comforts, nay indeed of ſinful and abominable pleaſures, as one may read in their Alcoran. It may be, few

Christians are altogether so sensual; but, sure I am, the far greater sort of Christians, so called, are very gross and carnal, at least, very low in their conceits of the state of future happiness. Heaven is a word as little understood as holiness, and that I am sure is the greatest mystery in the world. It would be tedious to run through the particular various apprehensions of men in this matter, and indeed impossible to know them. The common sort of people understand by heaven either just nothing but a glorious name, or at best but a freeness from bodily torment: as nothing of hell affects them but that dreadful word *fire*, so nothing of heaven but the comfortable word *rest* or *safety*. Others, it may be, think there is something positive in heaven, and they dream of an honourable, easy, pleasant life, free from such kind of toils, labours, pains, persecutions, reproaches, penuries, which men are subject to in this life; this is a true notion, but much below the nature of that happy state. Others are yet more highly affected with the words of glory and glorious, and seem to be much ravished with them, but are like men in a maze or wonderment, who admire something that they understand not, and are altogether confounded in their own apprehensions of it; as if a man should be mightily taken with such a fine name as Arabia the Happy, and by a blind fervour of mind should desire to

go and visit it. Others rise yet higher in their apprehensions of heaven, and look upon it as a holy state, but that holiness is negative, *viz.* a perfect freedom from sin, and all temptations to it: and indeed this is a precious consideration, and that wherein many a weary soul finds much rest: but yet this amounts not to the life of angels; it is a lower consideration of heaven than what our SAVIOUR here presents us with. The state of the glorified saints shall not only be a state of freedom from temporal pains, or eternal pains, or a freedom from spiritual pains and imperfections, but a state of perfect positive holiness, pure light, ardent love, spiritual liberty, holy delights; when all created good shall perfectly vanish, all created love shall be swallowed up, the soul shall become of a most God-like disposition, shining forth in the glory that he shall put upon it, glorying in nothing but the blessed GOD, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, in his divine image and perfections, and wrapt up entirely into his infinite fulness to all eternity: which hath made me oft-times to nauseate, and indeed to blame the poor low descriptions of the kingdom of heaven which I have found in books and sermons, for too dry, yea, and gross; which do describe heaven principally as a place, and give it such circumstances of beauty, firmness, security, light, and splendor, pleasant society, good neighbourhood, as

they think will most commend an earthly habitation. True indeed, the HOLY GHOST in scripture is pleased to condescend so far to our weak capacities, as to describe that glorious state to us by such things as we do best understand, and are apt to be most taken with, and do most gratify our senses in this world; as a kingdom, paradise, a glorious city, a crown, an inheritance, &c. but yet it is not the will of God that his enlightened people should rest in such low notions of eternal life; for in other places God speaks of the state of glory according to the nature and excellency of it, and not according to the weakness of our understanding, and describes it at another rate, calling it the life of angels, as here; the beholding of God, Matth. v. 8. a coming unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of CHRIST, Eph. iv. 13. God's being all things in us, 1 Cor. xv. 28.; it is called a knowing of God, and of his Son JESUS CHRIST, John xvii. 3. In a word, which is as high as can be spoke, higher indeed than can be perfectly understood, it is called a being like unto God, 1 John iii. 21. "We shall be like unto him." But this use is not so much for reproof as it is for information.

2. HERE is matter of reproof, yea and of just indignation against the gross, low, sensual, earthly life of professors, who yet hope to be the children of the resurrection, and to be as the

angels of God in heaven. What! hope to be like them then, and yet altogether unlike them now! I speak not in a passion, but out of a just indignation that I have conceived against myself, and against the generality even of saints themselves. I am not going to speak of covetousness, commonly so called; there is a sin much like to it, which is not indeed a single sin, but an evil and unseemly temper, which is earthly-mindedness, or minding of earthly things; or if you will, because I would not be misunderstood, a living upon the creature, or a loving of the creature, with a distinct love. Oh! the insensible secrecy, and insuperable power of this creature-love! I cannot sufficiently exclaim against it. Why do we spend noble affections upon such low and empty nothings? Are we called with such a high calling, think you, that our conversation should be so low? Is the fulness of the fountain yours, and do ye yet delight to sit down by and bathe yourselves in the shallow streams? Is your life hid with CHRIST in God? why then do you converse as if your life were bound up in the creature? Have you laid up your treasure in the blessed God? what do your hearts then so far from it? Is your happiness in heaven? why then is not your conversation there too? Do ye count it your bliss to see God? what then mean those fond and wanton glances that ye cast upon created comforts, and that unchaste

love which you bestow on things below? I mean not only the "bleatings of the sheep, and the "lowings of the oxen," I speak not of the grosser sort of earthly-mindedness, sensuality, or covetousness, but of that more refined and hidden creature-love, a loving of friends, relations, health, liberty, life, and that not in God, but with a love distinct from that love where-with we love God. To love all these in God, and for his sake, and as flowing from him, and partaking of him, and with the same love where-with we love God himself, is allowed us; but to love them with a particular love, as things distinct from God, to delight in them merely as creatures, and to follow them as if some good, or happiness, or pleasure were to be found in them, distinct from what is in God, this is a branch of spiritual adultery, I had almost said idolatry. To taste a sweetness in the creature, and to see a beauty and goodness in it, is our duty; but then it must be the sweetness of God in it, and the goodness of God which we ought alone to taste and see in it. As we say, *Uxor splendet radiis mariti*, the wife shines with the rays of her husband; so more truly every creature shines but by a borrowed light, and commends unto us the goodness, and sweetness, and fulness of the blessed Creator. You have heard that the glorified souls shall live upon God alone entirely, wholly, eternally; and should not the

less glorious souls, I mean gracious souls, do so too, in some degree? yea, even we who are upon earth, and do yet use creatures, should behold all the scattered beams of goodness, sweetness, perfection, that are in these creatures, all united and gathered up in God, and so feeding upon them only in God, and upon God in all of them. It is the character of wicked and godless men, that they set up and drive a trade for themselves; live in a way distinct from God, as though they had no dependence upon him; they love the world with a predominant love; they enjoy creature-comforts in a gross, unspiritual manner; they dwell upon the dark side of their mercies, they treasure up riches, not only in their chests, but in their hearts; they feed upon the creature, not only with their bodies, but their very souls do feed upon them; and thus, in a word, they "live without God in the world." All this is no wonder; for that which is of the earth, must needs be earthly, John iii. 31.; but is it not a monstrous thing that a heavenly soul should feed upon earthly trash? I speak without any hyperbole; the famous king of Babylon, forsaking the society of men, and herding himself with the beasts of the earth, and eating grass with the oxen, was not so absurd a thing, nor half so monstrous or unseemly, as the children of the Most High God forsaking the true bread of souls, and feed-

ing upon the low fare of carnal men, even created sweetness, worldly goods: nay, a glorious star falling from its own sphere, and choking itself in the dust, would not be such an eminent piece of baseness; for what is said of the true God in one sense, John iii. 31. is true of the truly godly in this sense, "He that cometh from heaven is above all," *i. e.* above all things that are below God himself.

3. SHALL this life of angels be also the life of saints? this may then serve as a powerful consideration to mortify in us the love of this animal life, to make us weary of this low kind of living, and quicken us to long after so blessed a change. Well might the apostle say indeed, that to die was gain, Philip. i. 21. ; for is not this gain, to exchange an animal for an angelical life? a life which is in some sense common to the very beasts with us, for that which in some sense may be called the life of God? For as the blessed and holy God lives upon his own infinite and self-sufficient fulness, without being beholden to any thing without himself, so shall the saints live upon him, and upon the self-same infinite fulness, and shall not need any creature contributions. The apostle indeed saith, that "the last enemy to be destroyed is death," 1 Cor. xv. 26. which is true of enemies without us; and it is true with respect to CHRIST, who shall make a general resurrection

from the dead, for that is the proper meaning of it; but it is true also, that the last enemy to be overcome within us is the love of life, therefore it is said that a man will part with any thing to keep his life, Job ii. 4.; and we do generally excuse the matter, and cry, Oh! life is sweet, life is precious. It must be confessed, and it may be granted; I believe that there is an inclination of the soul to the body, arising from that dear and unconceivable union that God himself hath made of them, which is purely natural, (some say altogether necessary for the maintaining of man in this complex state), and not in itself sinful; possibly there may not be found a man upon earth so holy and mortified, in whom this is not found; certainly it is the last hinderance to be removed out of the way of our perfect happiness. This, although in itself natural, yea necessary, and without blame, yet in the inordinateness of it, ordinarily, if not constantly, becomes sinful. I count him the most perfect man in the world, who loves not his own life with an inordinate sinful love, who loves it only in God, and not with a creature-love distinct from God. There are two ways whereby this natural and lawful love of life becomes sinful, *viz.* immoderateness and inordinateness: Immoderateness is, when men love their lives at that rate, that they are filled with unreasonable and distracting fears, cares,

and thoughts about them, when the whole business of life is almost nothing else but a studiousness to preserve the being of life. Inordinateness is, when men, though they do not love their lives at that excessive rate, yet do love life as a creature good, not in God, nor in order to him, but love it for itself, as something out of God. Every carnal man in the world is guilty of the latter, and I doubt but few saints altogether free from the guilt of it. Now, that this immoderate love of life ought to be subdued in Christians, all men almost will grant: if any will not grant it, we can easily prove it from the command of God, Matth. vi. 25. "Take no thought for your life." 1 John ii. 15. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." Both which words, in the most favourable interpretation that can be given of them, do, in the judgment of all, forbid immoderation: nay, a mere philosopher would enforce this from mere moral considerations, which I cannot now stand upon. But this inordinate love of life, as it is a more secret, sticking evil, a more refined corruption, is harder to be discovered, and men are loth to be convinced of the evil of it. Now this particular distinct loving of life, not as in God, but in itself, as a creature-good, is clearly condemned in that first and great commandment, Matth. xxii. 37. "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all

“ thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with
“ all thy mind;” *q. d.* God the supreme, infinite, perfect, original, essential, self-sufficient Good, is to be loved in the highest, and purest, and strongest manner; that the heart of men is capable to love; and all other things only in him, and under him, and as being of him, and for his sake. Let it be allowed that life is good, yet it must be added, that it is but a created good: let it be allowed that life is comfortable, yet it must be acknowledged that man’s chiefest comfort and happiness doth not stand in this animal life. So then, life itself is to be loved in God, who is the fountain and spring of life; it is to be loved in the quality of a created good, and no otherwise. Now, created goods are to be loved only in the Creator, as coming from him, as partaking of him, as leading to him. Argue the case a little thus: The soul of man is allowed to love its body with which the great God hath match’d it, and to love union with this body, which union we call *life*; but this body being a creature, and a creature much inferior to itself, and much more ignoble than itself, cannot in reason be judged to be the fit and adequate object of its strongest and best affections: that must needs be something more excellent than itself, and that cannot be any thing in this world, (for this world hath nothing so noble, so excellent in it as the soul of man),

It must indeed be the Creator himself. Well, seeing God is the supreme, self-sufficient, perfect Good, he is to be loved with all the strength and powers of the soul, singly and entirely : and the will of God being God himself, is not only to be submitted to, or rested in, but to be chosen and loved above all created things, yea, even above life itself, the best of creatures. So then, if it be the will of God to call for our lives, we ought readily to give them up ; because we ought to love the will of God much more than our lives. I pray you drink in that notion, *viz.* that the will of God being, pure, holy, and perfect, should not only be submitted to, or rested in, but even loved and chosen above all creatures. Now, the will of God is not that only whereby he teaches men, and prescribes laws to them, but that whereby he rules and governs the world, and disposes of men in any condition of life, or takes away their lives from them. The eternal Fountain of goodness can send forth nothing but what is perfectly good ; and that which is perfectly good ought to be loved with an universal, pure, and, as far as possible, perfect love. This you will say, perhaps, is a high and a hard saying ; but let it not seem impossible for a man to love his own life only in God, and in subordination to him ; for this God requires, and he requires not things impossible, Luke xiv. 26. “ If any man come

“ after me, and hate not his own life, he can-
“ not be my disciple;” *i. e.* not simply hate it,
but in comparison of me and my will. It is
not then impossible, nay, you see it is a neces-
sary duty, without which we cannot be CHRIST’s
disciples. The saints of old found it possible.
Holy Paul gives this answer readily, Acts xxi. 13.
“ I am ready to die at Jerusalem for the name
“ of the LORD JESUS;” and Acts xx. 24. “ I
“ count not my life dear unto me, so that I
“ might finish my course with joy.” It is wit-
nessed of the whole army of the saints, in Rev.
xii. 11. that “ they loved not their lives unto
“ the death,” *i. e.* they did not value them in
respect of God and his truth. Neither let any one
flatter himself and say, Yea, if I were called to
die for God, I would rather do it than deny
him; for the will of God is as much to be eyed
in his sending for us by a natural death as by
martyrdom, and a not giving up our lives to
him at any time, is as truly to deny him and
his will, as not to give them up at the stake
when we are called to it. Besides, how shall we
imagine that he that is unwilling to die in his
bed should be willing to die at a stake? Now,
this duty of being mortified to the love of this
animal life being so difficult, yet so necessary,
and so noble, how doth it become every saint
to study to attain to this perfection? which,
that we may, let us press upon ourselves this

consideration, this doctrine, that the glorified saints shall live as angels of God in heaven. We know that if this body were broken down, this low life cut off, we should live like angels, not being beholden any more to poor creatures for help or comfort, but should be filled with the fulness of God, filled with his image and glory, and live upon him entirely for evermore. Yea, I may add, that this very living above our own lives merely at the will of God is a participation of the angelical life even in this world; therefore labour to be mortified to that love of this life which is here upon earth, yea, to be weary of it, yea, almost ashamed of it.

4. SHALL we thus live the lives of the angels, subsisting in God, feasting upon him, filled with him to all eternity? this may moderate our sorrow which we conceive for the loss of any created good, houses, lands, husband, wife, children, &c.; yet a little while and we shall not miss them, shall not need them, shall not desire them any more. The blessed angels live a glorious life, and they have none of these, but are perfectly satisfied in the enjoyment of God alone: they have no wives nor children, yet they want none; and yet a little while, and we shall have none neither, neither shall we want them, having all things in the God of all things: they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are in conjunction with the FATHER, with

Love, and Goodness, and Truth itself, and so they have no want of any thing. If you have no candles left in the house, yet it is towards day-break, and the sun will rise upon you, and you shall need none, and yet have light enough too. In a word, learn to live beside them whilst you have them, and you will be the better able to live without them when they are removed.

5. I COME now to the fifth and last use that I shall make of this doctrine ; and oh that you and I may make this happy use of it ! Shall the saints be as the angels of God in their way of living upon God, and enjoying all happiness in him alone for ever ? shall this certainly be our life in heaven ? oh ! then, labour to begin this life upon earth. If you cannot perfectly transcribe, yet, at least, imitate that angelical kind of life. Though you are here imprisoned in a body of earth, and oft cumbered and clogged with bodily infirmities, and called to tend upon bodily necessities, yet, as far as this animal state will permit, live upon God. Do not excuse nor vindicate that low kind of earthly life, do not justify your living below and besides God, but stir up yourselves to behold where your happiness lyes, and live not willingly below it. Certainly a godly soul hath more than bare hope in this world : God the blessed, infinite, and communicative Good, hath not locked himself so far out of sight, but that he gives his people

a comfortable beholding of him even whilst they are in their pilgrimage; and what Solomon saith of the life of the godly, he means it of their present life, Prov. xv. 24. "The way of life is above to the wise:" their living not only shall be, but is now above; it is a high way of living. They are certainly a puny sort of mechanical Christians, that think and talk only of a heaven to come, and dream of an happiness without them, and distinct from them. The truly godly and God-like soul cannot so content himself, but being spirited and principled from above, is carried out after the infinite and almighty Good, as a thing is carried towards its centre; and hastens into his embraces as the iron hastens to the loadstone, and longs to be in conjunction with it. If therefore ye be from heaven, live above all, above all earthly things, "If ye be risen with CHRIST, seek the things that are above," Col. iii. 1. If ye be born of God, live upon God, and suck not the breasts of a stranger. Deny self, live besides self, *i. e.* live not to your lusts, live not to the service of your senses, to the lust of the flesh, to the lust of the eye, to the pride of life; let not your souls be servants to your sins, no, nor to your senses; that were for servants to ride on horseback, and princes to walk on foot, Eccl. x. 7. Live above self, *i. e.* let your souls quit all their own interest in themselves, and entire-

ly resign themselves to God, as to all points of duty and service. But that's not all; neither is that it which I press you to from these words: but live above the creature and whatsoever is in it, *viz.* delighting in God, conversing and communing with him alone as the chiefest Good: desire not any creature any further than as it may help you forward to the Creator; neither delight in it any further than as it either represents some of the divine perfections, witnesses something of divine love, or leads to some divine participation or communion. Seeing we shall come to live upon God, and delight in God alone, without any creature, let us now live upon, feed upon, love God alone in every creature. Now, to give you a more distinct knowledge of this high and noble life, I will explain it in some particulars, negatively and affirmatively.

I. NEGATIVELY.] 1st, "LIVE not upon self." I speak not of living unto self, but live not upon self, self-excellencies, self-sufficiencies, any created accomplishments, which was the life of the Stoics, those great philosophers, who placed happiness in the enjoyment of themselves, which they called *ἀρπαξία*. To enjoy one's self indeed is a high duty, a noble privilege, a duty of the gospel, Luke xxi. 19. "Possess ye your souls." But how must we enjoy ourselves? why, only in God. He enjoys himself,

1. NOT who, in a fullen melancholy, retires to a solitary and monastical life, as many of the sower sort of Papists do.

2. NOR he who in a proud mood disdains the perfections of God shining forth in other men; and hiding himself from them through envy, contents himself to sit and admire his own personal accomplishments, as many humorists do.

3. NOR he who finding nothing without him, nor knowing nothing above him to give his soul her full rest, settles upon a foundation of his own, and admires a self-sufficiency in the temper of his own spirit a little subdued by philosophical precepts, as the Stoics did, and our Quakers do. But he who enjoys himself in God, *i. e.* who doth not view himself in the narrow point of his own being, but, taking a view of himself in the unbounded essence of God, loves, and enjoys, and values himself, and all his personal excellencies as he is in God, and partakes of his perfections. To live in a way of self-converse is below the end of man's creation, who was made for a higher good; and hereby a man shall never obtain true happiness, for it is peculiar to God alone to be happy in himself. " In a word, a soul that confines itself to its
" self, and lives, and moves, and rejoices only
" within the narrow cell of its own particular
" being, deprives itself of that almighty and
" original Goodness and Glory that fills the

“ world, and shines through the whole creation.”

2dly, “ LIVE not upon any creature without “ yourselves.” Self indeed is a creature; but yet for clearness in proceeding we shall distinguish them. Now; this is the life of the greatest sort of men, they live beside God, and move only within the sphere of the creature. You will easily understand that I speak not of the bodies living upon the creature, for so God hath appointed that it shall live; and yet as to this too, I say with our SAVIOUR, “ Man liveth not “ by bread alone,” &c. ; but I speak of the soul of man living upon the creature as its highest good, and feeding upon it as its best fare: they rise up early, and sit up late, and God is not in all their thoughts: they are filled with domestic and foreign comforts, but behold not the Father of lights from whom all these descend: they live upon the good things of the world, yet live without God in the world. Now by these men,

1. I DO not mean those heathens that in the most idolatrous manner do, in the literal sense, set up the creatures for gods.

2. NOR those Christians that in a most gross manner do make idols of the creatures, and place their happiness in them.

3. No, nor only those earthly professors, who follow the world too eagerly, and have such a deep and rooted respect for it, that they can

be ordinarily content to suffer creature employments to juggle God and duties out of their hearts and houses, whose worldliness is apparently too hard for their religion. Who then? shall we come any nearer? yes:

4. THOSE are guilty of creature-converse who do not enjoy all creatures in God; who love any thing in any creature with a distinct love, who do not love it only in God; who love silver, gold, houses, lands, trading, friends, with a particular pinching love. Oh take heed of this creature-love, of valuing any created thing any otherwise than in God, any otherwise than as being from God, partaking of him, and leading to him.

3dly, "LIVE not upon ordinances." These are God's institutions, love them, cleave unto them, attend upon them, let no temptation cause you to leave them; but live not upon them, place not your religion, place not your hope, your happiness in them, but love them only in God; attend upon them, yet not so much upon them, as upon God in them; ly by the pool, but wait for the angel; love not, no not a divine ordinance for its own sake. Why, who doth so? alas! who almost doth not?

1. THUS did they in Ezek. xxxiii. 32. who delighted in the prophet's eloquence, and in the rhetoric of his sermons, as much as in a well-tuned voice and harmonious music: and

so do thousands in England, who read the Bible for the style or the story's sake, and love to sit under learned and elegant discourses, more for accomplishment than for conversion: and swarms of priests, who preach themselves more than CHRIST JESUS, even in his own ordinances; as a proud boy rides a horse into the market, to set forth himself more than his master's goods.

2. BUT there are many not so gross as these, who do yet use ordinances in a way very gross and unspiritual, placing their devotion in them, and sinking their religion into a settled course of hearing or praying; who will wait upon God, as they call it, at some set and solemn times, new moons, and sabbaths, it may be evening and morning; but religion must not be too busy with them, nor intermeddle in their ordinary affairs, or worldly employments; it hath no place there; they do not count it a garment for every day's wear.

3. AND not only these, but even almost all men are too apt to seek rest in duties and ordinances, or, at least, to be pretty well satisfied with the work done, whether they have conversed with God there or no. Oh, if you love your souls, seek your happiness higher! Conversing with divine ordinances, I confess, is honourable and amiable, but it is too low a life for an immortal soul.

II. AFFIRMATIVELY.] LET nothing satisfy you but God himself; take up with no pleasure, no treasure, no portion, no paradise, nay, no heaven, no happiness, below the infinite, supreme, and self-sufficient Good. Let your eye be upon him, and his all-filling fulness; let your desire be unto him, and to the remembrance of his name; follow hard after to know the LORD, and to enjoy the FATHER through his Son JESUS CHRIST; let your fellowship be with the FATHER, and with the SON by the SPIRIT, 1 John i. 3. "O love the LORD, all ye
" his saints," Ps. xxxi. 23. yea, "love him with
" all your soul, and with all your strength,"
Matth. xxii. 37. yea, and keep yourselves always in the love of God; persevere and increase in the love of God; "Keep yourselves in the
" love of God," Jude, v 21. Oh sweet duty! Oh amiable pleasant task! Oh sweet and grateful command! Away ye crowd of creatures, I must keep my heart for my God: away, ye gaudy suitors, away ye glittering toys, there is no room for you; my whole soul, if its capacity were ten thousand times larger than it is, were too scant to entertain the supreme Good, to let in infinite Goodness and Fulness. Oh charge it upon yourselves with the greatest vehemence! Love the LORD, O my soul, keep thyself in the love of God; let the love of God constrain you, and keep yourselves under the

most powerful constraints of it. In a word, live upon God as upon uncreated life itself, drink at the fountain, feed upon infinite Fulness, depend upon almighty Power, refer yourselves to unsearchable Wisdom, and unbounded Love; see nothing but God in the creature, taste nothing but God in the world, delight yourselves in him, long for communion with him, and communications from him, to receive of his fulness grace for grace. Then do we live most like angels, when we live most purely in God, and find all the powers of our souls spending themselves upon him, and ourselves, our life, and all the comforts of it flowing from him, and again swallowed up in him. But because we are yet in the body, I shall explain it in these following particulars.

Ist, "CONVERSE with God in all your self-excellencies." I bade you before not converse with these; now, I say, converse with God in these. Thus do the angels; they know nothing that they have of their own, they enjoy nothing distinct from God: they are excellent creatures, excellent in knowledge, power, holiness, &c. yet they enjoy all their excellencies in God, and ascribe them all to him, Rev. vii. 12. and so let us labour to do.

I. VIEW yourselves, not in your own particular beings, but in the essence of God; look upon yourselves as being and subsisting in the midst

of an infinite Essence, in which the whole creation is, as it were, wrapt up, and doth subsist.

2. AND whatever excellency you find in your souls or bodies, look not upon it as your own; maintain not a *meum* and *tuum*, a distinction of interests between God and yourselves, but look upon all as God's, and enjoy it in him.

3. WHEN you find yourselves tempted to cast a fond and unchaste look upon the beauty, strength, activity, or temper of your own bodies, upon the ingenuity, wisdom, constancy, courage, composedness of your own souls, take heed of settling into a selfish admiration of any of them, but enjoy them in God, and say, This, O my body, this, O my soul, is no other than the portraiture of the blessed God; these created excellencies are broken beams of the infinite, unspotted, uncreated perfections, Jer. ix.

23. 24. Having once attained to this, we shall no longer covet to be admired, desire to be commended, fret at being undervalued; I mean, not in a selfish manner, but rather break out in a spiritual passion with the Psalmist, "O that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" Psal. cvii. 8.

3. NAY, let me add, when you find yourselves ready to put your own stamp upon God's best coin, to look upon supernatural gifts and graces with a sinful selfish admiration, remember that

you have them only in CHRIST JESUS, and enjoy them in your head ; labour to enjoy grace itself only in CHRIST, as the apostle, Gal. ii. 20.

“ I, yet not I, but CHRIST in me.” 1 Cor. xv. 10.

“ I labour, yet not I, but the grace of God.”

So ought we to glory : I believe, I love, I am patient, penitent, humble, yet not I, but the grace of God that is with me, CHRIST JESUS that dwelleth in me. And indeed a godly man, who thus lives at the very height of his own being, yea, and above it too, knows best how to reverence himself, yea, and to love himself too, and yet without any self-love : for he loves himself in God, and his own endowments as divine ornaments.

2dly, “ CONVERSE with God, and live upon him in the excellencies of all other creatures, “ and in all your creature-enjoyments.” We cannot live without creatures, as the angels do indeed, but let us come as near them as we can, which is by living above creatures : place your happiness in God, and your hearts upon him ; labour to find God all things to you, and in you, and to be filled with his fulness ; labour to get your understandings filled with the knowledge of God, your wills filled with his divine will, your hearts filled with his infinite goodness and sweetness, your memories filled with the remembrance of his name, your whole souls filled with his holy and pure image, filled with the

fruits of his HOLY SPIRIT : nay, let these very bodies be filled not only with his good creatures, but more especially with his good will in the creatures. It is said indeed of the sensual Epicures of the world, that their bellies are filled with God's hid treasures, *i. e.* with rare and precious delicacies : but how much better doth God fill the bellies of his saints with his hid treasures, when he feedeth them with his divine favour, and dippeth his hand with them in the dish ? This is meat indeed which the saints eat of, which other men, though they feed at the same table, know not of. The glorified saints shall be satisfied wholly and perfectly with the divine image shining gloriously on them, and in them ; to which purpose that of the Psalmist may be accommodated, Psal. xvii. *ult.* " I shall " be satisfied when I awake," &c. Well, we cannot be so satisfied in this life it seems : however, though we cannot be so satisfied with it, yet let us not be satisfied without it, nor satisfied with any thing besides it. Resolve, holy soul, Well, if I must not be fully satisfied with the image of my heavenly Father till I awake, I will ly down, and fall asleep hungry as I am then ; for I will not fill my mouth with chaff, nor my soul with the husks that the swine do eat. But, in the mean time, get what you can of God out of creature-enjoyments.

I. ENJOY all things for God, and that these two ways :

(1.) USE all for him. Those riches, honours, interests, friends, which are clogs upon the heels of others, let them be as heels to you to carry you heaven-ward; let your souls be winged with those very enjoyments wherewith the wings of others are pinioned; and that which is fuel to their worldly lusts, let it be as fuel to feed and nourish your spiritual love. To use what we have for God, is the only way of not abusing it; this is one way of enjoying all for God, to use all for him: and yet there is something higher in that phrase of enjoying all for God, than this, *viz.*

(2.) VALUE no creature-comfort any further than as it leads to God; and this in a double sense too. 1. Value things to be good only by this, by their leading you unto God: *Perfectum in suo genere est mensura reliquorum.* Now, God being the supreme and infinite Good, any thing is so far good as it leads to the enjoyment of him. Now, the enjoyment of God is only in being like to him; holiness is his image; so then, every thing is good that tends to sanctification, and to make men partakers of a divine nature. We are usually mistaken in the true notion of good and evil, of mercies and judgments, judging according to the taste, as foolish patients do; but God's thoughts are not as our thoughts. Measure all things by the proportion they bear, and the tendency they have to the

supreme Good; and call not any thing evil that brings nearer to him, nor any thing good that draws off from him. 2. When you have found a thing that is really good, tending and leading to the chief Good, and to the possession of him; labour to enjoy it, and rejoice in it only under this notion, as such; when you love it, let it be with a pure spiritual love; and so order your delight in it, that it may be said, you do rather rejoice in the end of it than in the enjoyment of it.

2. ANOTHER way of living upon God in the creature is, to enjoy all things as partaking of him. "Every good and perfect gift is from above," Ja. i. 17. Every beam of created light floweth out of the Father of light. When the blessed and glorious God framed this stately fabric of the visible world, because there was nothing better in the world than himself, he was pleased to copy out himself in it, and to spread his own infinite perfections over it, and through it, Rom. i. 20. so that every particular good is a blossom of the first goodness; every created excellency is a dark draught of God, and a broken beam of this infinite Sun of righteousness. Created life, beauty, wisdom, goodness, sweetness, are nothing else but effluxes, or rather ebullitions out of the self-sufficient Fountain, scant communications made of himself, from uncreated Life, essential Wisdom, univer-

sal Goodness; and under this notion we ought only to enjoy them, and delight in them; and if we do so, we do not so much enjoy them, as God in them. Oh labour to do so! look upon the perfections which you find here below, not so much as the perfections of this or that particular being, but as they are so many drops risen out of the Fountain of all perfections, in whom they all meet, and are centred. It is well express'd by one, "In a particular being, love the universal Goodness;" let the whole world be as the garden of God to you, where every creature is a flower, from which you may suck something of the divine sweetness. Alas! at what a low and sensual rate do we live, when we rejoice in creatures, either as they are excellent, or as they are ours? whereas indeed neither of these is true; for they are not excellent, but God is excellent in them; and how can we call any thing our own, when God made both us and all things for himself? Oh! how injurious is it to the blessed God, when we rob him of his own perfections that he hath imprinted upon the creature, by loving it, and delighting in it, not as in him, but as something distinct from him! nay, we are then injurious to ourselves, as we shall see by and by. Labour to enjoy and to converse with God in the creatures. "O how precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God!" cried David, when he had

been meditating of the creature's excellencies, Psal. cxxxix. 17. Labour to abstract your minds from terrene things even in the enjoyment of them, and call upon yourselves to love, and live, and feed upon God in them; live not upon the dark side of your mercies, but upon the representations of God in them. Is there any thing good? oh, this is a taste of infinite goodness! Is there any thing sweet? oh how sweet is the God that made it so! Is there any thing lovely? it is a picture of him whose name is Love. Is any thing firm, stable, lasting? it is a shadow of that glorious Essence with whom there is no shadow of change. Have you any thing strong? it arises out of that God with whom is everlasting strength. Doth any creature give rest, ease, refreshment? it springs out of the all-satisfying fulness of God. In a word, labour to climb up by every created excellency, as by so many beams to the Father of lights: let all the world be to you as God's temple, and be ready to say of every place, as Jacob, "How dreadful is this place! surely this is none other but the house of God;" that God who runs through all created beings, and from himself derives several prints of beauty and excellency all the world over. But especially take heed of your own created comforts, that they do not insensibly lead away your hearts, and ensnare you into a sinful, particular, distinct love of them; which

is a sin soon committed, hardly discerned, and most hardly reformed. If any be freed from these inordinate affections, sure they are but few, and those few have come dearly by it, as one said in another case, With a great sum they have obtained this freedom; they have paid for it, not with the foreskins of the Philistines, but with the lives of what they so loved, there being no way to cure this evil distemper but cutting off the member infected with it, the part that it fed upon. As a branch of this head, let me add, Labour to live upon God in the excellencies of other men; value them and all their accomplishments only in God, as he that did *diligere Deum habitantem in Augustino*, admire God, and enjoy God in them. Where-ever you see wisdom, goodness, ingenuity, holiness, justice, or any other accomplishment, say, here and there is God. And this is the honest way of making ourselves masters of whatever is another man's, and enjoying it, as truly as he himself doth, yea, as truly as if it were our own; when we behold all these beams, as coming from the same Fountain of lights, and do love them all in him with an universal love. This is the rare art of having nothing, yet possessing all things; of being rich, though one have nothing; and of being wise, though one know nothing.

3. THE last way of living upon God in the creature is, to taste and feed upon the love of

God in them, not only his common bounty, but his special love in CHRIST. The good will of God gives a sweet relish to every morsel, as I hinted before. Even in the midst of all your delightful, pleasant, sweet enjoyments, let your souls be more affected with this than with them; let this be as the manna lying upon the top of all your outward comforts, which your spirits may gather up and feed upon. But this I touched upon before, therefore I shall add no more concerning it. Thus I have shewn you how you may imitate the life of angels, in living upon God, even whilst you live in the body. To this I may add another particular or two.

3dly, “CONVERSE with God, and live upon him in all his ordinances:” Let communion with God be your drift in every duty, and the very life, and soul, and sweetness of every ordinance. You never read of a soul more thirsty after ordinances than David, as might appear abundantly; yet if you look well into the expressions, you will find, that it was not so much after them, as after God in them; not after the dead letter, but after the living God, Ps. xlii. 2. “My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God;” and Ps. lxxxiv. 2. “My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.” Let the word preached or read be as a voice from heaven talking with you; let your conference be a comment upon that word; let meditation be

as a kind of bringing down God into your souls, and prayer as a raising up of your souls into God, nothing but faith and love put into praises. And so of all the rest.

4thly, "CONVERSE with God in all his providences;" prosperity, adversity, plenty, penury, health, sickness, peace, and perplexity. This is a large theme: but as to prosperity, I have spoken something already, under that head of conversing with God in creature-enjoyments: as for adversity, I have said much more in a large discourse to describe and commend the art of conversing with God in afflictions. Briefly at this time, converse not with losses, wants, afflictions, but with God in them; and that not only with the justice, righteousness, severity, and sovereignty of God in them, but with the goodness and mercy of God in them. They are dark providences, we had not need to dwell altogether on the dark side of them. If all the ways of the LORD towards his people be mercy and truth, Psal. xxv. 10. then his roughest and most dark ways are so too: if God be wholly love, 1 John iv. 8. then his very corrections proceed not from hatred: if it be his name to be good, and to do good, Psal. cxix. 68. where have we learned then to call his afflicting providences evils, and to divide evil, which is but one, even as God is one, into *culpa* and *pœna*, sin and affliction? Surely we speak as men; and

if God call them so, he speaks after the manner of men, as he often doth. If the governing will of God be pure, perfect, and infinitely good and righteous, ought we not to converse with it in a free and chearful manner, yea, and to love it too? In a word, pore not upon creature-changes, nor the uncertain wheels of motion, that are turning up and down we know not how, nor how oft; but fix yourselves upon that all-seeing Eye, that unbounded Understanding, that unsearchable and infinite Goodness, that derives itself through the whole universe, and sits in all the wheels of motion, governing all the strange motions of the creatures in a wonderful and powerful manner, and carrying them all in their several orbs to one last and blessed end.

THUS imitate the angelical life, even whilst you are in the body: converse with God in self-excellencies, in the creature-excellencies, ordinances, providences; and yet labour to be more like him still, to abstract your mind from all these, and all material and sensible things, and to converse with God without the help of any creature, I mean in the Spirit, and by a secret feeling of his almighty Goodness, and energy of grace, and the communications of a divine life in your souls. In a word, if you would taste of heaven whilst you are upon earth, labour above all things for a true conjunction of your hearts

with God, in a secret feeling of his goodness, and a reciprocation of love to him; and to find the holy and blessed God exercising his grace and power upon all the faculties of your souls, and rendering them like unto himself, and all these powers of the soul mutually spending themselves upon him freely and entirely, as upon the chiefest Good, which is their proper and full object. Seeing the saints in glory shall be like unto the angels of God in their way of living in and upon God alone, receive, I pray, this exhortation, which I have so largely prosecuted, and labour to begin that life, as far as you can, upon earth. Is there not reason for such an inference? doth it not now flow naturally from the doctrine? If you think it do not, I will add two or three particulars to strengthen this inference, or at least to clear it.

1. It is highly reasonable that we begin to be that which we expect to be for ever, to learn that way of living in which we hope to live to all eternity: so that I infer, upon as strong ground as the apostle, 1 John iii. 3. "He that hath this hope purifieth himself," &c.

2. If this be the life of angels, then it is the highest and noblest life that any created being is capable of. As by the bread of angels, and the tongue of angels, the most excellent food, and the most excellent language is understood in scripture, so must we understand this life of

angels. Now, it is very suitable to the reasonable soul, that immortal, noble being, to aim at the highest and noblest life : see Matth. xvi. 26. " What shall a man give in exchange for his " soul ?"

3. **THIS** shall not only be our life in heaven, but itself is something of heaven, a beginning of heaven. This life is not a thing really distinct from life eternal, John xvii. 3. " This is " life eternal," &c. 1 John v. 13. " Ye have " eternal life." Therefore we read of eternal life abiding in men, and not abiding in them, 1 John iii. 15. ; so also John vi. 54. " Whoso " eateth my flesh hath eternal life." A holy soul thus deified, thus living in and upon God, is as truly glorified upon earth, in some degree, as the world is enlightened by the morning sun, which is as truly, though not so gloriously, as by the sun in its greatest height. Oh low and ignoble spirits, who can be satisfied with a happiness which shall only be in the world to come ! Certainly it is true and proper speech to say, that a participation of God is an anticipation of heaven ; and to be like unto him is to be with him. You see what reason I have to make such an inference, and to form it unto such an earnest exhortation ; oh, therefore, I beseech you before God and his holy angels, to endeavour to be like him, and to live like them !

Obj. SAY not, how can men on earth live like angels? *Ans.* 1. But fall on and imitate them, though it be—*haud passibus æquis*: labour to be *ὡς ἄγγελοι*, if you cannot be altogether *ἰσαγγελοι*. 2. We are bidden to live the life of God, Matth. v. ult. “Be perfect,” &c.; so 1 Pet. i. 15. “Be ye holy,” &c. If I speak high, how high speak these texts?

Obj. SAY not, but how can this animal life permit this? *Ans.* 1. Thus men have lived in the body; thus lived Enoch, Gen. v. 22.; thus lived Paul, Philip. i. 21; thus lived David, that man after God’s own heart, (the greatest and most divine character that can be given of a mortal man); Ps. lxxiii. 25. “There is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.” 2. Cannot we live in the body except we live to the body? You see saints upon earth live above other men upon earth; and yet a little more pains, take the other flight, and you may live above yourselves too, higher than you do. I will only add a motive or two to this duty of living upon God.

1. “THE last enemy to be overcome is creature-love.” This is the last enemy that keeps the field, by which alone the greatest sort of men do perish everlastingly: beat down this, and you win the day, and shall wear the crown; nay, the very conquest of it is a crown, as I said before.

2. "To live upon God in the creature is to enjoy the creature in the best sense." You will lose nothing of the creature by this means, but shall enjoy it more fully than ever you did: for the creature is ten thousand times sweeter in God than it is in itself. Yea, in a word, this is the way to enjoy all the world, and to enjoy the accomplishments of all men, and all things, as much as if they were your own.

3. "It is the way never to lose any thing." He that lives upon God spends upon a stock that cannot be wasted, drinks at a fountain that cannot be exhausted. So much as we enjoy of God in the creature, we do not lose with it; and that which we do not so enjoy, we deserve to lose. This then is the secure and honourable life, in comparison of which the life of a prince is but a wallowing in the mire. "LORD give us evermore this bread," and hearts to feed upon it. Amen.

F I N I S.